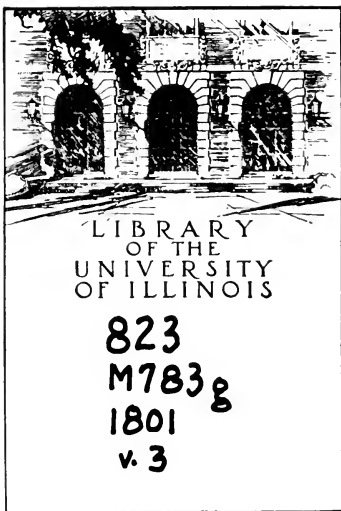


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GRASVILLE ABBEY:

A ROMANCE.

GRASVILLE ABBEY:

A ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

“ See yonder hallow’d fane ! the pious work
“ Of names once fam’d, now dubious or forgot,
“ And buried ’midst the wreck of things which were.”

THE GRAVE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. G. AND J. ROBINSON,
PATERNOSTER-ROW ;

By R. Noble, in the Old Bailey.

1801.

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GRASVILLE ABBEY.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MYSTERIES ELUCIDATED.

We wish remov'd, what standeth in our light,
And nature blame for limiting our sight,
Where you stand wisely winking, that the view
Of the fair prospect may be always new.

WALLER.

“FATHER of light! Almighty God,
Supreme! who, with an all-seeing eye,
surveyest the transactions of thy crea-
tures here on earth, look down on one
unworthy of thy goodness, though hum-
bly soliciting thy aid,—who craves thy
support to see those mysteries explain-
ed, the elucidation of which may strike

her soul with horror; but let thy heavenly assistance inspire her with fortitude and resignation, to listen to the dictates of thy will!"

Such was the conclusion of Matilda's prayer, as she retired to her pillow.

She enjoyed a calm and serene repose till a late hour in the morning, and found herself much refreshed. Having descended to the parlour, neither Leonard, Agnes, nor her brother, had breakfasted.

"I am sorry," said she, "to have made you wait: but this morning I have been uncommonly lazy."

"We have not waited for you alone," answered Alfred cheerfully: "there is another person our guest to-day. In short, you no doubt recollect, that,

that, when you mentioned leaving the abbey, I told you a stranger would soon appear, to make you alter your resolution. The time is now arrived that my prophecy is to be fulfilled, and the mysterious behaviour I have been guilty of, I hope, in some measure excused. Look at those folding doors, Matilda: the sight of them has at a former time occasioned sensations of the utmost terror: do not, therefore, expect the entrance of a ghost, but a being of flesh and blood.—Come forth!” cried he.

Matilda expected to see the venerable figure of father Peter.

The doors hastily flew open, when, instead of the aged sage, an elegant young man sprang forth, and caught her in his arms. Matilda started back, and instantly exclaimed, “Mr. Milverne!”

“ Not so,” said Alfred : “ he does, I must confess, greatly resemble that gentleman ; but you now see before you Archibald lord Milverne.”

“ Do not believe him, charming miss Maferini,” answered the stranger. “ I deny the title ; let me only be known to you under the plain name of Milverne,—happy appellation, under which I first became acquainted with the most charming of her sex !”

Matilda was above the little arts of female coquetry, practised by the sex in general ; she did not discourage either his lordship’s hopes or addresses ; and after some little time spent in mutual inquiries, they seated themselves at the breakfast-table.

Leonard and Agnes wished to have taken their meal afterwards, out of respect

spect to lord Milverne; but his noble soul scorned the empty title he possessed, and considered it of no other consequence, than a more than usual call upon him to act through life with honour and integrity, as an example to those in a lower sphere, who had never received the advantages of a good education, or the rudiments of virtue from honest and respectable parents.

He insisted that no unusual ceremony should be observed on his account; and his request was complied with. Matilda received the pleasing intelligence that count D'Ollifont was yet living, and that the news they had received of his death, was merely of his own contrivance, executed by his creatures in France; and that there was not a doubt but the cruel proceeding of proving Alfred Maserini a deserter, was also

effected by schemes of villany from the same quarter.

Lord Milverne acquainted them that the last intelligence he received of the count, was that he had been some little time at Paris, but that his popularity in that city was greatly decreased, on the discovery of an assassination he was proved to be the author of, and must certainly have suffered for the crime, had he not been screened by royal power.

“ I shall now,” continued his lordship, “ acquaint you with my adventures since you left England, till a certain event happened, which will close my narrative, and give room for one to be related by my friend here,” (pointing to Alfred) “ who will then have an opportunity of clearing up his own conduct

duct so as entirely to obliterate every suspicion of unkindness to a sister, who has shown the most noble heart, and affection for her brother, in her fortitude and generous behaviour through his misfortune."

Here he bowed to Matilda.

" On the night of the masquerade, I had not long forced Mr. Maserini into the coach, when a crowd of people began to assemble, collected by the repeated cries of 'murder!' from the count's servants, who kept me in hold. I was immediately delivered into the hands of the watchmen, and two constables, who had by this time arrived, charged with having favoured the escape of the murderer. I was directly taken to a watch-house near, but was soon admitted to find bail for my appear-

ance, when they were informed who I was.

“ The next morning I appeared before a magistrate : my person and name were soon recognised by that gentleman, who had been acquainted with my family. To him and the persons assembled, I related the whole affair ; and made it clear that the second pistol was fired for defence, as the count first discharged his. In short, D'Ollifont's conduct appeared in the most black and infamous colours, and I was honourably discharged. He continued for some time in a dangerous state : at times he was insane ; and when those fits came on, it was his desire, in his lucid intervals, that no one should attend him but his confidential servant and steward, Rabourn.

“ The news of this shameful ungenerous

nerous transaction of the count's was the general talk of the town; and most people allowed that punishment had fallen on the right person.

“ As soon as I had settled some business of consequence in London, I immediately set off for France, on my way towards Italy; two strong reasons urging me to take the journey,—one to see a dying father, who, by letters I understood, laboured under a severe indisposition, which increased upon him daily;—the other, the hopes of finding some exiled friends, whose situation I greatly pitied and lamented.

“ The first news I heard when I arrived at Paris, was the death of my parent, and that Mr. Maserini was declared a deserter, for not attending to an order left at his lodgings the very night he departed from London. I

made it my business to obtain an immediate audience with two of his majesty's ministers; and though I clearly explained the mistake, was unable to procure any redress. It was an order (they said) by the royal command, and could not be rescinded.

“ Finding it was in vain to take any more trouble at court, I proceeded directly towards the Alps, and stopped at the very house where lady Caroline Albourne had been saved from the fire,—as I supposed, by you. I immediately crossed the mountains, and soon found myself in this country. I directly proceeded to the residence of my late father, which was now inhabited by a friend who had accompanied him hither, and his domestics. His will was produced; and I found myself possessed of eight thousand a year, except a few legacies, a genteel annuity settled on the
the

the person before mentioned, and handsome presents to all his servants.

“ All my affairs being settled in a short space of time, I made every cautious inquiry concerning you ; but all proved abortive ; and I was still more perplexed, as you mentioned no particular place you intended to travel to, in answer to the letter I sent to Dover, though it was my earnest request. This, however, I considered as the effect of the hurry and distress you were then in. An idea at last struck me, that I had heard say Grasville Abbey was the residence of your ancestors. I had often heard talk of the venerable pile, when in Italy before, and now determined to visit it,—conceiving that you might be there concealed. I immediately set out for Montserrat, taking with me only one servant ; and, after two days’ journey, we found ourselves near this Go-

thic mansion. It grew dark ; but I resolved to see the external part before I slept ; we at length entered the thick wood on the left side of the building. Its lofty towers began to appear above the dark gloomy foliage, and the rising moon shone in full splendour on its grey decayed walls. I stood still some time to admire the awful and beautiful scene before me ; after which I resolved to have a nearer view of the abbey. My servant now attempted to dissuade me from my resolution.

‘ My lord,’ said he, ‘ we were told at the inn we last stopped at, that this wood was infested by banditti :—for heaven’s sake do not venture farther.’

“ I laughed at the poor fellow’s fears, and considered the report as merely the consequence of no person daring to go near the abbey. I therefore insisted

fisted on riding forward ; and we proceeded into the very heart of the wood, when I began to be rather alarmed myself : for the moon being obscured by heavy clouds, its intricacies became so great, that I could not find the path we had first followed.

“ We had not continued in this situation above a quarter of an hour, when we perceived two men approach, whose appearance gave some reasons for apprehension. They were armed, and we also had weapons of defence. At length they accosted us ; and by the manner of their address, we found they were robbers. Having asked a few frivolous questions, they began to use rough language, and told us we must go no further, for that we were their prisoners. — But our number being equal, I resolved not tamely to submit ; and giving my man the hint, he engaged

ed with one, while I undertook the other. Each of the party fired a pistol, but not one fell ; when one of the men whistled aloud, and in less than three minutes we were furrounded by a party of the banditti. Having disarmed us, and taken all our money, they led us in a kind of triumph still further into the wood, till we arrived at the opening of a large cave.

“ The robbers having knocked at a heavy door almost concealed by trees, it was opened by a youth, seemingly not above fourteen, who conducted us, by the light of a lamp, down a steep descent, which gradually became wider, and terminated in a large space partitioned into several apartments. In one of the largest a cloth was spread for supper, and an elderly man stood cooking of it in another room. ‘ Joscelin,’ said the leader of the party, ‘ secure these

these prisoners ; but mind that they are used well, and give them a hot supper.'—'Signor,' continued he, turning to me, ' your situation is not so bad as you may suppose : if you are not refractory, we shall be moderate.'—Jofcelin conducted us to the further part of the cave, and placed us in a small but clean chamber, in which was a good bed. Felix, my servant, now began to rub his hands with pleasure, and strove to communicate that comfort to me, which he derived from the idea of having a good lodging and supper, instead of a speedy death. But my distress was not so easily to be alleviated. I was now confined, I knew not for how long, from the sight of all I held most dear ;" (His lordship here looked most tenderly at Matilda) " and I considered that death itself would have been more welcome than such an untimely delay. I could, however, blame nothing but my
own

own rashness, and consequently endeavoured to support my mischance with as much philosophy as possible.

“ Supper was brought us, and although I had no appetite, I tasted of it : but Felix took care to make up for my deficiency in point of eating.

“ I had but little sleep that night, and rose in the morning very unwell. Breakfast was brought us early ; and while I was expecting what would be the issue of this strange treatment from men whose behaviour I expected to find quite different, our attendant, after a few hems, thus addressed us :

“ As you are two persons whose courage and manners I much admire, I shall entirely deviate from the regular rules of our society, and even put myself in your power, by acquainting you
with

with circumstances, which were it known I related, death must be my reward."

" Having thanked him as well as my surprise would let me, he continued :

" One moon has nearly passed, since we lost two brothers of our order, which accordingly now wants that number to make it complete. It is our usual custom, after such events, to seize on the first travellers who fall in our way; and that lot has happened to you; and you are in consequence now treated in our customary manner, which I am sure you have no reason to complain of. An offer is always made to the persons thus taken, to accept the vacant places of our society, and live with us after the usual method of the brotherhood. You will both of you shortly receive such proposals: and though no compulsion
may

may appear in them, yet, mark me, certain death is the consequence of a refusal. We never choose to enter any one actually against his will, as treachery may be the result of such a choice. If it is therefore found that your inclinations are not agreeable to our wishes, you are both certain to fall victims. Do not discover the information I have given you of our proceedings, as in that case I must, as I before told you, become a sacrifice to my good-will to you. Be cautious, therefore ; maturely deliberate on your situation ;—profit by the intelligence I have communicated ; nor idly throw away your lives, when you have it in your power to preserve them.”

“ Picture to yourselves my situation, after having heard the information of the friendly robber ; forced, as I may say, either to follow a life of depredation and villany, or fall a sacrifice to a
set

set of wretches who, I had now every reason to suppose, were destitute of even the common feelings of humanity. —I had hardly time for this reflection, before the captain of the banditti entered, and presented me with the proposals, the contents of which I knew too well ; and having desired me to peruse them, left us alone, yet not without mentioning that he should call again in the evening to receive our answers to the offers which we should find set before us.

“ I was unable to read the detested paper ; but after some little time Felix rehearsed it aloud, and I listened with attention.—It declared that we should share equally in the profits arising from adventures, though every one must take his share in the danger, and pay implicit obedience to the captain or leader of the company.

“ Never,”

“Never,” I exclaimed, “will I submit to the infamous measures of this shameful crew; instantaneous death is far preferable to the languishing life of misery I must here endure, frustrated in all those schemes of happiness I had planned to enjoy within a few weeks.”

“Alas! sir,” answered Felix, “I have always been taught, that disappointments are for our good: and if we really consider them as the acts of a Supreme Being, how can they be bad? —Why should we then throw away our lives, and yield them up to men whom we despise, when we may perhaps, by retaining them, recover our liberties, with those blessings we before had in contemplation?”

“I must confess, the argument of the poor humble Felix brought a blush into the face of his master.—“That man,”
thought

thought I, “ without the advantages of a refined or liberal education, can give instruction to me, who have had every advantage in point of learning,—as well as an example, to teach me fortitude, philosophy, and resignation to the divine will.”—His words made such an impression on my disordered imagination, that I resolved at once to submit to the terms of the banditti, in such a manner as should give them no room to doubt of my attachment to their cause ; as in this case more opportunities might offer, to release us from so horrid a confinement. The captain at night again visited us ; and both Felix and myself testified the greatest happiness to accept of the offer ; and the better to give reasons for our readiness to comply, we gave him to understand we were men of desperate character, who knew no way of living, but by the aid of the riches of others : “ and for those purposes,”

ses," said I, " we take it by turns to act as servant, and through this means have accomplished many schemes productive of profit, which at some other time I will relate to you."—Garbardo (for that was the leader's name) seemed highly pleased with our willingness, and the account we gave him of our characters; in short, he determined that we should be entered into the order that very evening. Accordingly, the whole party were called to assemble; and, after undergoing the usual forms, we received the dress and arms of the two deceased robbers; we were then congratulated, under the feigned names we had given them, as brothers of the society.

" We soon found the good effects of conforming to their will with a seeming degree of pleasure; for they so far relaxed from their usual methods, as to permit

permit us to sleep together. One rule, however, they strictly adhered to ; for we were not suffered to go out of the cave together upon any occasion, and were given to understand that he who remained behind was a kind of hostage for the other.

“ It was a general custom for three to go together to purchase provision, which was procured from a man who kept a kind of shop on the skirts of the wood. He was well acquainted with the gang, and proved grateful for their custom, by providing them with the best food, and keeping their situation an entire secret. The place was hardly ever intruded upon by any but the banditti : so retired was the spot where it stood.

“ It came to Felix’s turn to go first to the victualling booth ; nothing, however, offered, to improve the liberty of
leaving

leaving the cave ; and he was accompanied by two staunch friends to the society.—Nor did my journey prove more successful ; and I returned in some measure in despair of ever finding means to escape.

“ Felix was again my comforter, and inspired me with hopes that at another time we might meet with more fortunate circumstances which might enable us to obtain a release from these heavy chains of slavery.

“ The next day when Felix walked to the wood, he returned with a pleasure in his countenance, which, I could plainly perceive, showed he had met with some pleasant adventure ; nor was my conjecture wrong : for when I eagerly inquired of him, the first opportunity, if he had any good news, he informed me, to my great satisfaction, it was no other than

than that he had seen Leonard at the place where he had been. 'Nor did either of us,' continued Felix, 'foolishly discover our joy at meeting one another, as you might have supposed; but he, seeing in what company I was, acted with the greatest caution. I, however, found means to whisper to him, unseen, that on such a day he would see you at the same place.'—

This relation, though for the moment it inspired me with a kind of joy, yet was but a poor preface to any ideas of liberty. I determined, however, to make the most of it; and accordingly, during the interval of time, I wrote, in a letter, a detail of the circumstances that had involved me in a situation, of which I gave the description. This I sealed up, and put in my pocket, ready to slip into Leonard's hand, when I saw him.

" I visited, as usual, the place, attend-

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ed by two men, and, in one corner of the shop, saw Leonard, as I expected.— I found means to convey the paper unperceived into his hand, and thus returned with some degree of comfort to the cave.

“ I must now,” continued his lordship, “ give up my narrative, and resign, as I before informed you, the task to Mr. Maferini.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TO lord Milverne's concluding words Alfred replied—"I own, my lord, I feel considerable pleasure in undertaking the task you have imposed on me, as I shall now have an opportunity of explaining to Matilda my reasons for that mysterious behaviour which carried in it a strong resemblance to unkindness, though I had her interest and happiness in view.

"I shall therefore begin from the first appearance of that gloom and uneasiness which seemed almost to crush every pleasing quality, and give a kind of morose turn to my temper and manners, doubtless, disgusting.

“ It was, I believe, the second day after our arrival at the abbey, that Leonard was dispatched to procure provision from the public market, and set off accordingly. At his return, you, no doubt, recollect, he desired to speak with me alone.—The subject he had to communicate, was his having seen Felix at the place where he had stopped, which was (as he described it) extremely retired, and consequently suited well his purpose on that account.—He gave a description of the persons who were with him, and of the dresses they wore, which confirmed them in my opinion to be banditti.

“ What to make of this adventure, I knew not, and was still more astonished when Leonard informed me Felix had whispered in his ear, that, if he attended at the place the next day but one, he would see his master there.—This intelligence,

intelligence, as you may suppose, caused in me the greatest alarm for the fate of Mr. Milverne. By the accounts I had heard before of the banditti in these parts, I conjectured he was confined by them, as he really was. To the uncomfortable sensation which this information gave me before, the next moment was added another cause for horror, amazement, and, I may say, distress.—The casement in my chamber above stands opposite my bed; as I lay upon it, I could plainly perceive part of the west tower; nor had I retired above an hour, before I observed a strong light in one of the windows;—and awaking Leonard, he plainly saw it as well as myself. I determined, however, to mention nothing of this circumstance, or that relative to Mr. Milverne; and he had my orders accordingly.

“ Can you, Matilda, blame me for

this secrecy?—I well knew the situation of your heart, and was certain the information of either of these circumstances must have considerably heightened that anxiety and misery which you then laboured under.—This may account for my melancholy the next day. The uneasiness, you, no doubt, observed, when you proposed being of the party to search the rooms in the west tower, and also on our conference together afterwards, when we consulted how we should act concerning Mr. Milverne. We also, after having retired to our chamber, spent the best part of the night in conversation on that, and the light we had seen.”

Matilda well recollected that night, which was the same when she listened at her brother's chamber door, and was so alarmed at the incoherent sentences she

she heard.—She forbore, however, to interrupt her brother.

“ We also watched again for the light, and saw it ; when, who can express our astonishment at plainly perceiving a figure pass backwards and forwards, which at last seemed to vanish with it !

“ Leonard, according to the appointment he had received from Felix, set off again for the market, as we informed you, to procure wine,—the bottles we had before, being broken while he was gone. You questioned me on the strange alteration in my spirits and behaviour, and wished much to be acquainted with the cause of the change ; which information I refused, though I told you I had reasons for the greatest uneasiness.

C 4

“ Leonard

“ Leonard returned, and (as you no doubt well recollect) with the news of count D'Ollifont's death, and the search that was making after me, both in France and Italy.—Leonard then asked to speak with me alone: he informed me he had really seen Mr. Milverne and two other persons, all dressed in the same manner as the former ones,—and that Mr. Milverne had slipped a letter into his hand unperceived. This he gave to me, and I eagerly opened and read it. All my fears for Mr. Milverne were realised; and I found his situation, by his own description, to be just what I expected. In short, this intelligence, added to what I had seen the night before, — the idea of the count's death, and my own situation,—drove me almost to distraction, as my behaviour plainly showed. I drank freely at supper; and you must remember my frantic expressions, occasioned by
the

the fumes of wine, and a distressed imagination.

“ We heard a groan from those folding doors : I immediately ran to them : Leonard was unable to hold me back, but followed me. I pushed them open, and saw, by the means of a flash of lightning, a figure, of a deadly pale, stand in the centre of the apartment. The sight of it was but momentary ; for all again being dark, except from the lights in this room, it seemed to vanish at the further end.—Leonard, who was close to me, likewise saw the same ; and it was this which occasioned those exclamations of horror, which, we thought, your insensibility had prevented you from hearing.

“ I found myself, however, greatly mistaken, when Leonard informed me, the next day but one, that you had

questioned him on the subject. I now told him, if you made any further inquiries, to say that I had given him the most positive orders to be silent on the topic. Lord Milverne had mentioned in his letter, that, through a fortunate and unforeseen circumstance, Felix would be again at the same place the next day : he also hinted he had faint hopes of gaining over two of the banditti to his interest.

“ Accordingly, the following day, in the afternoon, the time appointed, Leonard set off, and found Felix, as he expected, with two others. They exchanged notes without being perceived ; but Leonard could observe the master of the shop, and the two men, seemed to wonder, by their looks, at seeing him just at the time of their arrival.— I had ordered him to read the letter before he returned to the abbey, that if
it

it was necessary to procure any articles more than what we had got, he might purchase them, and bring them with him:—he did so, and they were carried unopened to my chamber. I was surprised to find a dark lantern, some wine, and eatables.—The letter, however, which he gave me, soon explained this: his lordship informed me in it, that he had brought over two of the men entirely to his wishes, who had led that way of life but a short time, and who entered into it as the only means to avoid starving. Being informed by him, it was in his power to make them comfortable for life, could they aid his escape, they had both sworn to serve him to the utmost of their power.—He added, that one of these men and Felix would be at the abbey gates a little before midnight; Felix being, for the first time, suffered to go out in search of adventures with this man.—The mean-

ing of this visit was to consult on the most likely scheme of escaping from the robbers, as too frequent attendance at the market might excite their suspicion.

“ I must own I was not by any means pleased with this plan : I considered that these two men might act in this manner merely to fathom the inclinations of their new brother ; and, in that case, our residence would be discovered to the villains also.—There was now, however, no alternative ; and Leonard attended at the outside gates exactly to the time.”

Matilda here well recollected the surprise and terror she had suffered at seeing them enter the court, while she was watching for the light in the west tower.

“ He having conducted them to the
parlour,

parlour, I descended; and we began a consultation on the most probable means of effecting lord Milverne's escape from the banditti. Nothing that was proposed seemed to carry with it hopes of success, owing to the vigilance of the robbers, who, as was before observed, detained one as a hostage for the return of the other.—In short, we were not able to come to any determination; and our little party broke up without having agreed on any plan whatever.—Leonard again conducted them out of the abbey, and we retired to our beds.

“ The following day but one, you questioned Leonard again; and, according to my orders, he gave no satisfactory answer, but was greatly surprised to hear your determination of leaving the abbey.—This he communicated to me; and you, no doubt, well remember our conversation on the subject,

subject, which ended with your consenting to continue a fortnight longer ; and, if the mysteries were not explained in that interval, you were immediately to repair to the convent of N**** in France.—I mentioned the appearance of another person, to make you alter your resolution,—hoping by that time to have invented some contrivance for the release of lord Milverne.

“ Leonard had, during this time, brought me word that the same visit would be repeated at the abbey again at midnight. They were punctual at the hour ; and he accordingly conducted them to the parlour, where I again attended.

“ The only method that could now be thought of, was by the application of an herb, which, if taken to a certain quantity, would occasion a death-like sleep,

sleep, and was similar to the Turkish poppies, though the juice was not of so dangerous a nature.—This idea was suggested by Uloff, the robber who accompanied Felix. He observed the root might be easily procured, and that, by the help of a little art, and this properly applied, the robbers might be led to believe lord Milverne dead; which would at once effect his escape: for it was a general rule among the banditti, to inter a deceased comrade immediately in a vault which stood near their cave,—from which he might with ease extricate himself, the coffins never being fastened down.

“Strange as this thought was, there seemed no other more likely to succeed; and I found that his lordship had agreed to carry this plan into execution, provided it met with our approbation, and Leonard could procure the herb.

“As

“ As Leonard was conducting them across the court when leaving the abbey, the figure again appeared in the west tower ; which greatly astonished them all.

“ The next morning you informed me of the human form and lamp which you had seen reflected in the glass that stood in your chamber. This account, added to the strange voice which we both heard, made me resolve to watch in the west tower ; which I accordingly did.

“ The same night, Felix and three others of the banditti (they having brought over one more to their interest) came to the abbey, unknown to either Leonard or me, to see if we had got the herb, as they were in hopes the next day to have a good opportunity of carrying their scheme into execution.

cution. They knocked at the outer gate, then burst it open, and proceeded directly to the parlour.—These were the persons whom we mistook for the officers of justice, as their arrival was entirely unexpected, and neither Leonard nor myself had a sight of them.—Their intentions, therefore, proved fruitless; and they left the abbey, unable to find us.

“ The next day Leonard attended at the place of rendezvous, and found Felix, who communicated to him their adventures the night before; and, having given him the herb, Leonard understood they intended yesterday for the trial of its effect.

“ This was accordingly done; and by the effects of it, and the help of Felix and his assistants, his lordship was shown to the whole of the banditti as a corpse.—A coffin was therefore prepared,

pared, and, in the evening, he was conveyed to the pedestal, and buried with the usual ceremony; one of the robbers being habited like a monk.”

The mystery of the strange funeral which Matilda saw was now entirely elucidated.—Her brother continued—

“ After the interment, the company returned to the cave; but Felix and one of the robbers were fixed on to go in search of adventures.—They therefore, immediately, repaired to the vault, and conducted lord Milverne here; after which both joined their comrades as usual.—But his lordship means to go to-day to a principal magistrate some few miles from hence, and give an account of these depredators on the public. The whole of them will consequently be seized; when Felix and the three converts to their cause will be selected

lected from the banditti, and the remainder left to take the due course of the law."

Thus Alfred Maferini ended his narrative. But, though Matilda had heard many circumstances of a strange nature explained, which had caused her considerable uneasiness, yet nothing had been said to clear up, in a satisfactory manner, those astonishing events which seemed in every degree to confirm the report of the abbey being haunted.

These ideas had not crossed her mind but a few minutes, before Alfred informed her that there was yet another tale to be related by one whom he expected every moment:—"And I am certain," continued he, "that his story will clear away every mist of doubtful horror concerning this building, and obliterate every superstitious thought,
by

by a clear elucidation of the mysteries that encompass it."

In about a quarter of an hour the folding doors again opened, and father Peter stood before them.—Agnes, Matilda, and even Leonard and lord Milverne, were astonished how he could enter from that part.

"According to my promise last night," said the hermit, addressing himself to Matilda, "I now, as you perceive, attend you here, fair lady."

Alfred's countenance was now transformed to the gaze of surprise.—"I find," said he, smiling, to his sister, "we have also to expect explanations from you, Matilda."

"Indeed," answered she, "the task is soon performed."

She

She then related to them her finding the manuscript, and her journey on that account to father Peter's cave, with the reasons for not giving it her brother the next morning.

Alfred and the hermit's countenances glowed with pleasure at the mention of such a paper having been found.

"No doubt," exclaimed the latter, "this will be a principal proof against the murderer of your father."

Matilda immediately produced it, and it was read by lord Milverne aloud.—It is impossible to describe the emotions of Alfred Maserini, as he listened to the distracted words of his wretched parent: suffice it to say, they were equal to his sister's at her first perusal of the parchment.

The party being in some measure composed, father Peter was requested

by Alfred to relate those circumstances concerning Grasville Abbey, which had for years occasioned the most horrid reports to be spread, and worked with terrific sensations on the feelings even of those whose good sense had before taught them to despise every superstitious idea.

“ I shall, by your leave,” answered the old man, “ begin from the most early period of my life, and proceed gradually through every event ; which will all tend to show, that, however strange the ways of Providence may appear to mortal eyes, yet in a due course of time they will be productive of the greatest happiness and good to those who are deserving the protection of the Supreme Being.”

All being seated, listened with attention to the venerable speaker.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ELUCIDATIONS CONTINUED.

—————Something I'd unfold ;
————— for something still there lies
In heaven's dark volume, which I read through
mists.

DRYD. ŒDIP.

Good unexpected, evil unforeseen,
Appear by turns, as fortune shifts the scene :
Some, rais'd aloft, come tumbling down amain,
And fall so hard, they bound and rise again.

DRYD. VIRG.

THE HERMIT'S TALE.

" **BORN** to a splendid fortune, and brought up in all the elegance of an Italian noble, I attained my nineteenth year.—My father, the baron Sampieno, was advised to send me to Madrid, not only

only to finish a particular part of my education, but for change of air, my health being in that state which gave them serious alarm.

“ At the seminary to which I was sent, another young Italian, of my own age, was also placed by his friends. —His name was D'Ollifont: and our manners being greatly alike, gay, volatile, and dissipated, it was not to be wondered at, that a considerable intimacy took place between us:—in short, we plunged together into every folly and vice which that gay and voluptuous city offered to our view; and neither of us being under the strict rules observed by the general scholars, we had greater opportunities to follow every wild inclination, and gratify every wish we could form.

The consequence of our rash behaviour

haviour was a complaint of the governor's to each of our parents, which gave them the greatest alarm and uneasiness. —A considerable decrease was, in consequence, made in our allowances, and a severe reprimand sent us, for conduct which threatened, in some degree, to bring disgrace on our families. The reproof, though to both exceedingly mortifying, was not so distressing to us as the curtailment of our salaries, which would prevent our appearing among the extravagant society we had become acquainted with, as we must be ridiculed by those who had more to expend in the luxuries of the place.

“ As I was sitting, the day after I had received this information from Italy, meditating on my uncomfortable situation, D'Ollifont entered, and told me of his having received similar intelligence.

“ Do not give way to despair,” said he; “ but let us take some method to overcome the misfortune.”

“ I at first conceived he intended to write conciliatory letters of repentance, —and I must own, my proud soul did not altogether approve such a manner of proceeding; I therefore remained silent. But he soon convinced me I had mistaken his ideas, by informing me, in plain terms, he intended to commence gambler, and persuading me to follow the same course.—‘ I have not a doubt,’ he continued, ‘ but I shall amply make amends for what I have lost in my quarterly allowance.’

“ If I disliked the idea of making concession, how much more did I abhor the thought of entering into so mean and despicable an employment as D’Ollifont had proposed! — I was, indeed, greatly

greatly shocked to find that he had such intentions. — I expostulated with him on the disgrace, the infamy, of such a character,—and attempted, to the utmost of my ability, to paint, in their true colours, the mean and pitiful shifts they were obliged to have recourse to on many occasions.—I was, however, disappointed in my endeavours to alarm his pride, and make him give up so disgraceful a determination.—In short, we parted in enmity.

“ He soon after began this direct course to destruction, and in a little time became connected with a gang who were well known for the defrauds of which they had been guilty. Necessity, for the sake of my own reputation, now obliged me to shun one whose principles and morals were universally known and condemned.—The sacrifice was greater than I expected; but at

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length,

length, with some resolution, I got the better of my feelings, and enjoyed considerable happiness in the thought of the danger I had escaped.

“ My disposition became now more settled, and my manners entirely changed, from the wild career of youth to the more thoughtful deportment of manhood.—The consequence of this alteration was a thorough reconciliation with my friends, and a greater supply of money than I had ever received before.

“ It is from this only that I can account for the deadly hate which took possession of D'Ollifont, against one whom he had at a former period called his friend, and who still would have done any thing in his power to have reclaimed him from so contemptible a mode of living,—which it might now be

be properly called; his father having died, and left him but a small legacy:—the bulk of his fortune he disposed of to a distant relation.

“ Not long after this event, I had the misfortune to lose my parent, and by his death found myself in possession of his title, and the whole of his property, which amounted to a considerable sum,—there being no other children, and his wife having died when I was very young.

“ My affections had for some time been fixed on a lovely object, who had resided with her mother near the academy where I was placed. Beauty was her least ornament; an amiable disposition, added to an excellent understanding, made her, in my eyes, an object worthy to be the wife of a man even in

a higher situation than myself, though she had no fortune.

“ After an interval of a few months from my father’s death, I had the exquisite happiness to receive my charming Cassandra as my own. Spain was her native country ; and being unwilling to quit it, I resolved to acquiesce with her desire of settling there, as I had now no particular friends or relations in Italy. —Seventeen years were spent in a round of happiness, which, no mortal could enjoy in a greater degree than myself.— One girl and two boys were the fruits of our constant love; both of the latter died when infants, and the care of the education of the former was mine and my Cassandra’s chief employment.—I need not tell you how we loved her,—your own ideas must paint to you that affection which possessed our breasts for this remaining pledge of our felicity,—
when

when we saw in her every grace and every virtue which could adorn a female.—Alas! those scenes of bliss were not to last for ever, but, after this period, were soon to be changed for misery, anguish, and a series of years clouded with glooms of sorrow and adversity, never to be erased.”

The hermit shed a few tears at the recollection, and was under the necessity of pausing for some minutes to compose himself.

“ I had never seen D'Ollifont from some little time before my marriage till the time I am speaking of.—An interval of near eighteen years had elapsed: but yet his features were well known to me, though the greatest alteration was visible in his whole person.—I now beheld him in the utmost distress, having, as he said, been obliged to fly from that part of

Spain, where he had remained for a considerable time in the utmost disgrace, and in a state little better than starving. — He related to me how truly he repented of the vicious life he had led, and that his only wish was now to procure, in some way, an honest subsistence by his own industry. — I immediately offered him my house, as an asylum for the present, which he thankfully received, and lived with us after the manner of my own family. — During this time he behaved in a most pleasing and insinuating manner to all; and there was not even one in the family but greatly respected and admired D'Ollifont.

“ I rejoiced much in the reformation that had been effected in him, and determined to spare no expense or interest in the procurement of an office for him, on the emoluments of which he might live comfortable and happy.

“ Circum-

“Circumstances continued in this situation for some little time; nor had any place become vacant, which I thought worthy to present to him: he, however, still remained in my house, and every day gained more general esteem.

“One evening, having walked in my garden rather later than usual, I cut across an unfrequented path to my house:—on one side of it was a thick grove of trees, the foliage of which entirely prevented any thing from being seen behind. — It was a spot seldom intruded upon, insomuch that in some parts it was nearly impassable.—I had got about the middle of this place, when I heard D'Ollifont's voice mention, with vehemence, the name of my daughter. Though rather surprised at his manner, yet it awakened in me no suspicion; and I was just going to hail him, when words of a dreadful nature caught my ear.

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“ This

“ This night,’ said he to the person who was with him, (a man of infamous character, and who had formerly been his servant,) ‘ must she be secured.— You are sure you well know the place?’

“ Oh!’ returned the other, ‘ let me alone for that ! — and, egad ! you have found out an excellent spot ; for, were the lady Lucretia’s cries to be as loud as the town-bell, the devil take me if any one can hear her but those who are with you !— You will excuse me though, signor : but I think your manner of proceeding is ridiculous : — why not marry her ? for then, some time or other, you may stand a chance to come in for some of the baron’s money.’

“ Curfes on himself and money !’ exclaimed the villain : ‘ I could have plundered him of that long ago ; but the loss of it, as I told you before, would

would not make him half miserable enough: — it is revenge I thirst for, not gain; nor have I so long played the hypocrite with him, but to invent some scheme that may at once blast his happiness.—My hatred commenced against him when he shrunk from the proposals I made, and turned sage moralist: but it has, if possible, increased tenfold since I have seen him flourish, for years, in prosperity and honour, while I am doomed to live on the narrow limits of a small income. — You may say he acts nobly now, and he has it in his power to be of considerable service to me; but my proud soul is ready to burst every hour I am looked at as a dependant on his bounty; and I am continually become more anxious to work his downfall.’

“ I heard no more, but trembled with the emotions of horror and passion. — A wretch, whom I had sheltered

under my roof with the truest friendship, —to plan the dishonour of my child, was too much! — I unfortunately had a loaded pistol in my belt; and having torn away the boughs which parted us, I stood before the astonished reptile.

“ He trembled, and turned pale, as did Eburne, who was with him; but the recollection of the former still remained, to invent one of the most damnable contrivances man could be the author of.

“ Villain!” I exclaimed, and held the pistol to his breast, ‘ dost thou not deserve to receive death at the hands of one whom, having the greatest obligations to, thou wouldst crush to the earth,—and, fiend-like, grin at the misery thou hadst brought upon himself and family?’”

“ During

“ During the time I uttered these words, a servant from the house appeared in sight, though not near enough to hear what passed.

“ I mean not,” I continued, seeing him shrink from me, ‘ to assassinate you. —Doubtless, you have weapons—stand, therefore, and defend yourself.”

“ I have none,” he cried: “ my life is in your power.

“ Dastardly wretch!” exclaimed I.

“ At that moment the servant came up—he was sent from the house to seek me. Unfortunately, the last few words of D'Ollifont, with my answer, was the only part of the conversation he heard. —When, how was I astonished to hear D'Ollifont exclaim, ‘ I will die sooner than commit such a defraud,’ at the
same

same instant producing a forged note on the bank of Venice. — Here is a man,' (said he to the servant — pointing to Eburne) ' who can witness that your master just now threatened my life, unless I consented to be a partner with him in passing these false notes.'

" It is difficult to say which stood the greatest statue of surprise and horror, — the servant or myself; and it is probable, had I not been prevented by him, I should have taken away my own life.

" Being at length more composed, I reproached D'Ollifont in the bitterest terms for his perfidy, and walked forward to my house; but had not entered it above an hour before I found myself arrested on his accusation, and was that night, though all my friends interfered, dragged from my wife and child, to experience the miseries of a gaol.

" Picture

“ Picture to yourself my situation:— the night was spent in distracted ravings, and the morning brought a visit from my Cassandra and her daughter, which in some measure restored my scattered senses; but it was only to experience pangs the most poignant and severe.

“ D'Ollifont, and the wretch who was with him, swore to my having stopped the former in the private walk of my own garden, when by himself; Eburne being then at some distance, though near enough to observe all that passed:— that first, with fair words, I strove to persuade him to be an accomplice with myself in a forgery on the bank of Venice, and gave him a false bill, — informing him that I had many more of the same sort; but that, finding him continue obstinate in his refusal, I had proceeded to extremities, — and, placing a pistol to his breast, threatened
to

to deprive him of life, should he refuse:—that my intentions were frustrated by Eburne, who, hearing these words, immediately came forward.

“ My own servant was examined, and confessed, that when at some distance, he saw me hold a pistol to D'Ollifont's breast; and, at his arrival at the spot, heard him say he was unarmed;—and that I only answered, “ Dastardly wretch!”

“ It was now the general conjecture that this affair would touch my life; at all events I was doomed to a public trial.—It was in vain I pleaded my own tale, and the reasons for my behaviour:—to every one, except those to whom I was very well known, it carried in it something romantic that D'Ollifont should wish to debauch my daughter, which was sure to end in his ruin,
without

without even one chance to be benefited by the crime.

“ During the interval between my imprisonment and the day of trial, D'Ollifont was sent for to his relation, the count Maferini, in Italy, whose health was in such a state, that his life was even despaired of, owing to the false report of his children's death.— He returned, however, at the time my trial was expected to be brought on,— the possessor of his uncle's estates and wealth.

“ In the time of his absence from Spain, a number of false bills, the same as D'Ollifont had produced, were found, by the information of one of my own servants, buried in a small chest, near a spot I used much to frequent in my garden: this fresh proof, which I had every reason to suppose to
be

be planned by some scheme in which the villain Eburne was concerned,— and who, I have no doubt, bribed my servant, added greatly to the horrid accusation against me. — I had, therefore, entirely made up my mind to expect no mercy, and resolved to prepare myself in that manner which would give me a degree of fortitude in my last moments, that should impress every one with some ideas of my innocence.

“ The night preceding the awful day which was to decide my fate, my prison-doors flew open, and count D’Ollifont stood before me.—He started back some steps at my wretched appearance; and a convulsive trembling showed that his conscience touched him to the soul.

“ I fixed my eyes on him with a look which seemed to add to his confusion, and was going to upbraid him, when

when he interrupted me.—“Hold!” he cried: “I have even a greater power over you than you suppose.—Last night your daughter attempted to plunge a poignard in my breast; and there is little doubt that a similar sentence to that which passes death upon you, will do the same by Lucretia.

“I heard no more — but fainted before him.—The keeper of the prison was called, and after some little time I recovered. — We were again left alone.

“D'Ollifont now told me there was yet one way to save both myself and child. — The conditions he proposed were for me to go to Italy, and by a sacred oath promise to perform some services he should have occasion for.—
“And I,” he continued, “will swear,
in

in the same manner, that your family shall go with you, and your fortune in every respect be secured.

“ Was it true that my daughter had made an attempt upon his life, I was certain the laws of Spain must condemn her to death.—Had my own existence only been at stake, it is probable I should have scorned the villain’s offer; knowing my Cassandra and her child were provided for by money I had placed in the hands of a friend, so as to keep them above the frowns of fortune, in point of pecuniary concerns.—But the idea of my Lucretia being cut off by an ignominious death, occasioned most probably by love for me, in her revenge against my bitterest enemy, cut me to the soul; and almost any alternative would have been accepted to save her. — I demanded, however, the
nature

nature of those services, conceiving it might be some crime he dared not to undertake himself, and therefore had pitched on me to be the perpetrator of the deed.

“ He swore, by the most sacred oath, that my conjectures were ill-founded. Still my soul revolted at the idea of submitting to the villain in so despicable a manner, which would in the general opinion give testimony of my guilt. — I refused the offer, and he left the apartment in a rage. — The next object which presented itself was my wife in a state of distraction; my child—my Lucretia—was in the same prison, and sure to fall a victim to her rashness.

“ My situation was little short of madness:—I raved: but it was useless,
and

and could not save her.—Yet a way had been shown me to preserve her; and I had refused it. The keeper was called; I sent him to D'Ollifont; the wretch appeared, and received, with a contemptuous smile, my acquiescence to his proposals.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

“THE proceedings against me and Lucretia,” continued the hermit, “were now immediately stopped. — I took the oath required: — no one was found to appear against us on the day of trial: and the same night I embraced my wife and daughter in my own house.

“But my joy at the event was considerably damped by the general behaviour of my acquaintance, who seemed to shun both myself and family: — in short, it was plain that the method I had taken to evade public investigation, was in some degree known; and, as I had before conceived, it was, in the common opinion, a confirmation of my conscious guilt. — This, at least, reconciled

ciled me to one circumstance, which I was bound to perform — that of leaving Spain immediately.

“ Alas! this country (where I had spent years of felicity — where I had been universally respected and esteemed by every rank of people) was now become hateful to me; since almost every countenance seemed to look towards me with a gloomy eye of suspicion, even where I had before been welcomed, whenever I appeared, with smiles of friendship and confidence. — My God! what were my sensations! — Sensible of my own innocence, ten thousand deaths (could I *myself* alone have suffered) would have been less torturing to me than the present ignominy. — But when I saw Lucretia bow to a young lady in the street where we lived, as she pensively sat in the window between myself and wife, — and saw the salute
con-

contemptuously smiled at, and passed without being returned, (while she and her mother would burst into tears, and move from the spot) — then would I utter to myself—“ Better had I seen my child executed with me, in the view of a gazing multitude, declaring my innocence, — than thus to be doomed to shrink under the wounds of blasted fame and supposed infamy.

“ My affairs were very soon settled; and, with my wife and daughter, (attended by one man and a woman-servant) I set out for Genoa, where, according to appointment, I was to meet the author of all my miseries. — Our journey was necessarily slow, on account of the ill health of my Cassandra, who had suffered so severe a shock from our late misfortunes, that I was under the greatest alarm for her life.

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“ After

“ After some little time we arrived at the place of our temporary destination, — and applying to a person to whom I had a recommendation, he informed me count D'Ollifont had been waiting for me two days, and that I might see him that night at a certain place to which he would conduct me. — “ It is not publicly known,” said he, “ that he is in this country ; consequently secrecy is required.”

“ At my return to the inn, I found my wife had been taken more violently ill than usual, inasmuch that Lucretia had sent for a physician, who had just entered the house.—I asked his opinion on leaving the chamber:—he declared her disorder to be a total decline,—but did not then apprehend any danger. Towards the latter part of the day she grew better:—but I resolved not to mention my intended visit ; and I contrived

trived an excuse, therefore, for my departure at the hour I had fixed.

“ It was some time after the close of the evening, and nearly dark, when I met the man whom I had before seen in the morning. — He told me to follow him. — I rather hesitated — “ You have no reason for alarm,” said he, observing me attentively.

“ I had a brace of pistols in my pocket; and, after a few moments of consideration, did as he desired.

“ He first led me down a passage, of considerable length, at the bottom of which he halted.—Having produced a large key, he opened a small door, which discovered a gloomy Gothic hall, lighted by a lamp which was suspended from the top. It was supported by heavy Tuscan columns; and, in diffe-

rent niches, were placed, in order, several suits of armour.—At the further end was a flight of steps, on the top of which were a heavy pair of folding doors, arched over in the antique style above, and secured in front by a grate-work of iron.

“ My guide, when he got to the centre of this place, seemed to fall back a few paces, as if thoughtful; and then, holding up the lantern he had in his hand, looked me full in the face.— This behaviour I did not by any means like: — it had the appearance of assassination, and the gloom of the hall encouraged the idea. — I immediately drew one of my pistols from my pocket. — “ No treachery ! ” I exclaimed; “ or, by heavens, you die ! ”

“ He seemed disconcerted. “ By all that’s sacred, I mean none ! but only wished

wished to be certain I was right in the person I am conducting.

“’Tis well!” I answered:—“proceed.”

“He did so — and led me up the steps;—then taking from his pocket another key, he applied it to the lock of the iron grating.—It required great exertions to turn it; but it at length yielded to the force, and divided in the middle.—The door now only remained.

“Put up your pistol, signor:” said he: “you have nothing to fear.”

“This request I positively refused.—He then blew a small horn, which he had in his belt; when the folding doors immediately flew open, and two blacks with drawn sabres stood before us.

“A voice from the inner part now

uttered — “ Admit.” — They directly drew back, and we passed through the entrance. — The doors instantly closed, with some noise; and the blacks resumed their station before them.

“ My guide walked forward, and I followed with the pistol still in my hand.

“ It was a spacious apartment, though gloomy; and fitted up with some degree of elegance. — A few wax tapers were placed round the walls; but the light they gave was dim and uncertain. — In the middle was a long table, covered with green cloth; and on it were spread various papers, pens, ink, and a few books. A company of persons were seated round it, of about twelve or thirteen, and one at the head of the table seemed a kind of president in the assembly. — Their cloaks were all muffled round

round them; and a black feather, which each wore in his hat, hung over their faces, and added to the solemnity of their dark lengthened visages. — He at the head, I however observed, wore a white one.

“As I advanced, this person spoke; and I recognised the wretch D'Ollifont. — He asked why I measured my steps so cautiously?

“Because,” I answered, in a firm tone, “I am afraid of treachery.”

“Surely the fear is needless,” said he: — “have I not sworn?”

“I interrupted him — “Mention it not, D'Ollifont; you have sworn too much.”

“He seemed rather confused; and I
E 4 could

could perceive his gloomy countenance frown for the moment, though he wished to smile. — “ Take a feat,” he cried : “ we are all friends. — Nerone, help the signor to a glass of wine.”

“ This man, who was in waiting, directly ran to a large side-board covered with fruit, cakes, and wines. He handed the glass : — I refused it. — D'Ollifont entreated me to take it : — I determinately answered, “ No.”

“ To business,” said he.

“ With all my heart,” I answered. — “ But, mark me, count ! strictly adhere to the oath I have taken ; nor, in your request, infringe on the laws of general honesty, morality, or humanity ; for on those conditions only will I agree.”

“ I mean no otherwise,” said D'Ollifont :

font :—" be judge yourself.—I have an estate situate near Montferrat ; and on it stands the residence of my late uncle, Orlando, count Maferini. — The building is well known by the name of Grasville Abbey. — This, among other properties, was bequeathed to me, as his sole heir ; his two children having died in France. — Now the country people round the spot, for many miles, have encouraged ideas, from the gloomy appearance and Gothic structure of this ancient pile, that it is haunted ; and it is actually necessary, for the preservation of the furniture, papers, and other valuables, of considerable amount, that these suspicions should be kept alive ; which will more effectually prevent intrusion or robbery than any other method we can put into execution ; the peasants of that part being a wild untractable kind of people, and little bet-

ter than general depredators on the public.

“ You perhaps may wonder why we do not remove these articles; but my uncle’s will particularly requests every individual atom that was at his death in the abbey, should remain there, and only be taken from it as my necessity may require.— Now there are various deeds and memorandums, relative to his different possessions, that we may never have the least occasion to disturb; and which, consequently, will be open to the violence of any one whose curiosity or villany may prompt him to use force in entering the abbey.— The service that I have to request from you, is the performance of some trifling ceremony, with a lamp, in the external part of the building, at night, either by passing the casements with it in your hand, or fixing it

it for short periods of time at the different windows. This will be an innocent means of preventing invasion; and, by constantly visiting the abbey, your scruples will be satisfied in point of the extent of your oath.

“Your fortune will support you so as to enjoy the superfluities of life; and your residence may be fixed at any part near the abbey. — But one condition,” continued he, “goes further, — that if at any time, though many years hence, you discover persons to enter the abbey, and reside there, without notice from me, you shall immediately take every means in your power to raise in them alarms of supernatural appearances, and by that means drive them from the spot. — For your better convenience, there is a cave on one side of the wood which surrounds the abbey, that is never intruded upon, nor indeed

hardly known by any one in the place:—you may go to it of an evening; and from thence proceed, through a subterraneous passage, to the building.—If, after two years' constant performance of these injunctions, no interruption is perceived, you will not then be confined to the usual ceremony; but yet it is requested that a continual watch shall be kept upon it; and as I before observed, if intruded on, even fifty years to come, and both of us living, every means is to be used in the above-mentioned manner, to terrify all visitors to a removal."

"I must confess, this request, strange as it was, seemed far more agreeable to me than what I expected; and I conceived that, were there any villany lurking under it, I might discover the source,—and, without going from my oath, be of considerable service to the injured;

jured ; and, one time or other, have it in my power to retaliate on D'Ollifont. — I requested that the agreement should be drawn up on paper, that I might adhere to it, in time to come, without an idea of having forgotten its tendency.

“ This was agreed to, — and, in the course of an hour, it was finished. I carefully read the paper, and found it exactly corresponded with what D'Ollifont had said, — and then again swore, as I had before promised to do, that I would punctually fulfil it. As we were some miles from Montferrat, it was settled I should meet one of the company at a certain spot near the abbey, that day fortnight, who was to conduct me to it through the passage before-mentioned, show the cave, &c. and give any instructions I wished to receive. D'Ollifont mentioned that he should leave Italy

Italy on the next day, and return to Spain. As I was leaving the apartment, following my guide, he uttered, as if in some measure affected, "Adieu!"

"I immediately turned round, and with a piercing look of horror and contempt, answered, "Adieu! — I hope for ever!"

"He seemed chagrined, and looked as if surprised I was not more in awe at such a place. — He again seated himself. — We passed the blacks — the door closed after us, — and my guide locked the grates. — We then left the hall; and, that door being also locked, I soon found myself at the end of the place where we entered: — my companion then wished me a good night, and we parted.

"A heavy load now seemed to have
fallen

fallen from me; for the expectation of what D'Ollifont's request might be, had driven me almost to madness; and though even now I detested the meanness I had submitted to, — yet, in some degree, I was reconciled, when recollection whispered me that I had saved the life of my Lucretia, the beloved child of my heart.

“Pleased with the ideas of the pleasure I should convey to Cassandra in relating the service I was to perform (her dread of it having been equal to my own), I shortly found myself at the inn where we resided. — I soon made my way to our apartments, in one of which I found the woman-servant, Stella, in tears, mixing a draught: — I involuntarily exclaimed, “How is your lady?”

“Her answer, hardly articulate, pronounced, “Dying, my lord!”

“I heard

“ I heard no more, — but flew, half frantic, to her chamber, — where (oh! sight of woe!) on the bed was laid my beloved Cassandra, just recovered from a fainting fit; her head supported by Lucretia, and the physician seated (in a melancholy posture) on the other side. — I entered time enough to receive her last breath; and dropping on my knees, I clasped her hands, while tears flowed in abundance. — She knew me (though she had been insensible for nearly an hour), and exclaimed, “ My husband! — the Almighty aid thee!” — Then, turning her eyes towards her daughter, she seemed inwardly to supplicate heaven in her behalf; and, heaving a soft sigh, expired in my arms. — Lucretia fainted, and was supported by Stella, who had just brought the draught, while I remained lost for some time in gloomy sorrow and stupidity.

“ At

“ At length, turning to the physician, I desired to know why he had flattered me with hopes that she might live for a length of time.—He only answered by shaking his head, and saying the disorder had come to a crisis sooner than he expected.— He left the inn; and I (having ordered my daughter to be put to bed, and committed the care of the funeral to my confidential servant Jasper) retired to my own room, overwhelmed with the most poignant grief.

“ It is impossible to describe the anguish suffered by myself and child on this mournful event; I shall, therefore, draw a veil over the scene, a recollection of which is even now almost too much for me.”

The hermit here was constrained to make a pause of some few minutes, while

while he paid a tributary tear to the memory of so beloved a wife.

“ Suffice it to say,” continued he, “ in the course of a week she was interred near the place where we then resided, and I tore myself from the spot after a few days, with the two servants, and my now only remaining comfort, my dear Lucretia.

“ After a long day’s journey, a prey to the deepest melancholy, we arrived at Montferrat, and stopped at a tolerably-built cottage; the owner of which fortunately, had an inclination, and also convenience, to accommodate us with board and lodging for some weeks.—The situation suited me for the present, as it was extremely retired..

“ On the night and hour appointed, accompanied by Jasper, whom I was per-

permitted to acquaint with the circumstances I was involved in, I attended the place of rendezvous, where I was to be met by the person deputed by D'Ollifont.

“ We were both punctual; and, as I was still fearful of treachery from so vile a character, both myself and servant were armed. — He was alone: — his figure, which I could now more fully observe, was noble and majestic: his countenance very handsome, though there was a fierceness in his eyes, added to the turn of his dark brows, which made it in some respects terrific.

“ Follow me,” said he; “ and I will conduct you to the place you have before heard of.”

“ He led us to the cave I now inhabit.—We entered, and he showed me
the

the parts which you have already seen; but after some little time he opened a concealed door that discovered a small room. — From hence we descended, by a trap artfully jointed to the floor, a number of steps, at the bottom of which was an arched subterraneous passage, entirely dark:—our guide, however, was provided with a lamp, by which he lighted another placed against the wall:—We followed him along this place for so considerable a length of time that I knew not how far he might have taken us, and halted at the idea.

“Continue your pace,” said he; “and we shall soon be at the end of our journey.”

“His words were true; for, after a few windings, it terminated at a small door, hardly large enough to admit one person:—this we passed, and ascended
a flight

a flight of stone stairs. — At the top, we entered a small subterraneous room, — in which was a stool, a table, some eatables, and wine; with a bed, which showed (though empty now) it was daily occupied. — Our guide pressed against a spring, in a manner which he particularly explained; and, by a kind of mechanism, aided by clock-work placed at the further part of the apartment, a square of about five feet of the cieling above gradually sunk within two feet of the floor on which we stood: — this I jumped upon, — and, by a second pressure of the foot on a certain part, it rose in the same manner that it fell, and closed with equal nicety; by which means I found myself in that room opposite to the one we are now in.

“ The night was exceeding gloomy: considerable claps of thunder followed each

each other (though they seemed at a distance), and faint flashes of lightning darted on the casements.—Both my servant and our conductor were soon with me, by the same means that I had ascended; and we all three proceeded through this room to the hall, where we were met by a mean, meagre-looking fellow, with also a lamp in his hand that reflected on a countenance I did not by any means approve.

“It was now late; and a more than common oppression seemed to weigh on my spirits. — Our guide saluted this man.—“Eunchio,” said he, “has there been any interruption since the count last saw you?”

“None, signor,” he answered; “and I have regularly performed my duty with this lamp every night.”

“That’s

“ That’s well,” returned the other ;
“ lead us to the west tower.”

“ Jasper now whispered to me, “ Be careful, my lord ! — we know not who may be concealed there.”

“ I strove to quiet his apprehensions by a nod of confidence, though I felt considerable alarm myself.—There was, however, no alternative, and we followed in silence.—I understood from the conversation of Enochio and the other, as we were proceeding to the west tower, that the former had attended at the close of every evening, to perform the ceremony now invested in me.

“ In passing through one of the chambers, Jasper (who was behind, and partly in the dark) ran against a suit of armour that was placed there, with several implements of war, some of which are now
in

in one of the rooms under the upper apartments.—The crash it made in falling was horrible; and it had nearly destroyed my faithful attendant; he, however, fortunately escaped without any material blow.

“ Enochio said, when we entered the chamber above, that he thought he could see, through one of the casements, by the frequent flashes of lightning, some person on that side of the building. — He accordingly showed his light, and after a few minutes, passed the casement, with the lamp in his hand. — Having looked over this room, we descended to the lower part, where we heard several blows against the outer gates, and many efforts made to force them open.”

It is natural to suppose that this was the very night on which the late Percival

val

val Maferini, father of Alfred and Matilda, first discovered a light and figure in the abbey; which made him at the time (distracted with his own ideas) attempt, by force, to enter the building.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

“ WE were all surpris'd at the noise :—at length signor Ranolpho (which I now found was the name of our guide) said, he supposed it proceeded from the curiosity of some travellers who were passing that way.—I cannot say I was by any means well satisfied with this conjecture ; but I made no answer.

“ After having received many instructions from him, concerning the different pieces of mechanism contriv'd in this building, I remarked, with a look of some astonishment, that it was to me amazing, count D'Ollifont should have put himself to such expense and trouble, when the exertions of the civil
power

power, under just claims, might have answered the purposes he wished to accomplish.

“Ranolpho seemed confused;—after a pause he answered, ‘Your observation is just; but were the application made to the superior power of Italy, the curiosity of the peasantry would be still more considerably heightened; and I have doubts whether the vigilance of the most scrutinising persons could protect this place from their invasion.—It also would gain count D’Ollifont a bad name, which might, through their ignorance, occasion suspicions and remarks the most injurious to his character.—Besides,’ he continued, ‘the chief part of these articles of machinery were erected many years back, when this structure was inhabited by the monks; they made use of them to terrify persons of different sentiments in re-

ligious points to their own way of thinking, whom the chance of war had made their prisoners, and who accordingly were confined in their own abbey. By these arts, the victims of their superstition were taught to believe the holy fathers worked miracles by their faith.'

" There was a kind of equivocation in this speech, which I by no means liked, though I forbore to make any reply. What he said, however, concerning several of the traps, &c. being formed at a distant period of time, I found to be true, by the general appearance of the age of the workmanship; though there was not a doubt but they had lately been repaired and put in order.

" After a little time, we all left the abbey, and proceeded to the cave, where it was settled that I should meet
Enuchio

Enuchio at that spot, and at the same hour, the following night.—Ranolpho said he should leave Montferrat the next morning, and make the best of his way immediately after D'Ollifont to Spain.

“ We then parted.—Jasper and myself soon arrived at the cottage, after some conversation on the strange events we had witnessed.

“ I acquainted Lucretia with every circumstance relative to the abbey; and, though she expressed a considerable anxiety for my safety, yet, like myself, she was happy to find the request of D'Ollifont was no worse.—I, however, made her still more easy, by assuring her I never intended to visit the building, unaccompanied by Jasper.

“ In less than a month I hired a
F 3 house,

house, very little distant from the cottage:—it was not large, though neat and elegant; and, there being only my daughter and myself, a few domestics were sufficient to form our household.—I did not, however, intend to live by any means private or retired, though my own wishes prompted me to it.—I trembled for the health of my child:—it had been on the decline ever since the commencement of our misfortunes,—and the poignant grief she suffered for the loss of her mother, now seemed settled to a deep melancholy, which I dreaded to observe, and which my own health and spirits, I conceived, helped to increase.

“ It was for these reasons, therefore, that I punished myself, in receiving and paying visits to persons of distinction, for some miles round; and I could perceive, in some degree, it contributed to
lessen

lessen that weight of oppression which seemed to lie so heavy on her soul.

“ A month had not elapsed after my removal to my new dwelling, before a confused report was spread that Percival Maferini and his sister were yet living, and in Italy.

“ This intelligence seemed, in some respects, to unravel a part of the mysterious manner and request of D'Ollifont ; but I must own, the elucidations I pictured to myself were by no means favourable to him ; and dark schemes of villany seemed to unfold themselves to my view.—But still I could do nothing ; I was bound by my oath ; and suspicions were of no avail.—I and Jasper visited the abbey every night ; and, on those occasions, I made every search that was possible, to find a clue to D'Ollifont's conduct, which I supposed might be

concealed in some part of the building; —my endeavours, however, proved unsuccessful. — Enochio still continued near the place: and I could not but suspect that he was as a kind of watch upon my conduct. — His very looks seemed to indicate the blackest thoughts; and his manners confirmed the idea.

“ About this period, among the many foreigners who frequented my villa as they passed through Montferrat, was lord Albourne, a young Englishman of rank and considerable fortune.”

Matilda and Alfred started at the name; but they forbore to interrupt the hermit, who accordingly proceeded—

“ His manner pleased both myself and daughter; in short, there was a kind of noble sincerity in his disposition, which,

which, on a little further acquaintance, charmed me.—I must allow I felt a considerable happiness, on observing a mutual affection take place between my Lucretia and this nobleman.—His character, I understood from correspondents whom I could depend upon in England, was unblemished; and I knew I could bestow on my child a fortune worthy of such a husband.—Suffice it to say, he declared his sentiments; and she, above the little arts of female coquetry, confessed she loved him.—But still there were some obstacles to the marriage.—Lord Albourne had not yet been acquainted with my misfortunes, or with Lucretia's attempt on D'Ollifont's life.—To Lucretia there was also another impediment:—she must part with me for some time; his lordship had promised, after settling his affairs in England, he would return with her, and consent to remain in

Montferrat during my life-time.—But it would, at least, take twelve months to transact these affairs.—These twelve months' absence seemed to her a century, and darkened every prospect of felicity she might have hoped to have enjoyed.—At length, however, these obstacles were overcome:—lord Albourne was, by me, informed of the sufferings I had undergone,—and of Lucretia's impetuosity, in attempting to assassinate the author of my misfortunes.—His lordship sympathised with me in my distresses, and admired the heroic love of my child, though he was sorry she had thrown herself into the power of such a wretch.

“ The latter objection was at length over-ruled by him; and, I may say, considerably lessened by D'Ollifont, from whom at this period I received a letter in terms of the warmest friendship, and
breathing,

breathing, in some degree, a regret for the anguish he had caused.—The contents of it informed me, that (it having been hinted to him that my health was in a precarious state, and that travelling would, very probably, prove of infinite service) he would undertake that some one should perform my part in the abbey, if I chose to take a journey for two months, to re-establish my constitution,—D'Ollifont's character was now too well known to me, for me to conceive one favourable trait in his disposition; otherwise, this deception might have passed for an act of kindness and repentance.—I strangely suspected some foul deeds were to be executed in my absence, and at first resolved not to accept the offer: but, at length, overcome by the tears of Lucretia and the persuasions of lord Albourne, I consented to accompany them to France, but determined to re-

turn at least a fortnight before the limited time.

“ My situation was critical ; I dared not communicate my suspicions to any one, except Jasper :—my oath forbade it.—My surprise, however, was considerably increased by finding that Percival Maserini and his sister were actually in Italy ; and that the latter, by the authority of the king of Sardinia, had sent to Spain, to demand the keys of Grasville Abbey from count D'Ollifont, that the building might be searched, to find if another will could be produced of the late count Maserini, in favour of his children before his nephew.

“ An idea now struck me, which I considered would at once give me an opportunity of discovering the dark machinations of D'Ollifont respecting the abbey, though absent from Montferrat.

“ I there-

“ I therefore wrote a short answer to his letter, saying I should accept the vacation he offered me.—At the same time I determined to leave Jasper at my house, concealed, that they might suppose he was also with me.—I knew I could depend on his fidelity, courage, and understanding. To him, therefore, I related the forebodings of my own mind, and gave him instructions accordingly,—with a particular caution, that, should he find any one was confined there, or any treacherous schemes whatever going forward, he should immediately write to me, and (on the receipt of this token) I should come post, and incognito, to my villa.

“ Lord Albourne and Lucretia were shortly united, after an acquaintance of only six months; and as soon as the ceremony was performed, we set off for France.—Our journey was pleasant; and

and if ever I enjoyed one gleam of comfort after my misfortunes in Spain and the loss of my Cassandra, it was in this short period.—A gloom, however, still hung over the countenance of Lucretia ; the idea of leaving me proved a continual drawback on her felicity ; and the distressing day was somewhat hastened, by a letter from Jasper, requesting me to return immediately.

“ That fortitude, however, which I conceived I should exert when I parted with the only prop of my existence, failed me entirely at the afflicting moment ; and (instead of being able to support her through the trial) I found I in a great measure added to her grief, by the pangs I suffered myself, which were too acute to be concealed.—Lord Albourne seemed to share the sorrows of us both ; and (after shedding tears on my head) he removed his wife from my arms,

arms, that insensibly held her to my breast, and hurried her, in a fainting fit, to the carriage, — which with cruel swiftness soon bore her from my sight.

“ Alas ! every beam of pleasure, seemed now vanished, and the melancholy prospects of my mind received another tint of darkness, horror, and misery.—But a few months back, I had been the happiest of mortals,—the father of a lovely amiable child,—the husband of an angelic wife,—the possessor of an unblemished reputation :—now was I an exile, though in my native country ; bereft of wife, child, and even reputation, in the eyes of the world ; labouring under a stigma of shattered fame, never to be recovered.

“ Tormented with those ideas, I set out on my return to Italy ; but, unfortunately, was detained, through many incidents

incidents on the road, for near three days.—I, immediately on my arrival at my villa, had a private conference with Jasper.

“ His countenance showed he had much to tell, and that of a dreadful nature.—He informed me, that, after my departure, he kept himself as secret as possible, according to my orders, and only went out by night, and then concealed himself at a place near the cave. The second time of his watching, he perceived Enochio and three others, whom he did not by any means like, cautiously enter it about midnight,—and, some time after, he saw a light pass one of the casements in the west tower of the abbey ; but though he remained at the same place till near day-break, he never saw them return.—He attended again the next evening at an early hour, but saw no one go that way, though

though a light and the figure of a man moved several times, in the course of three hours, before the different windows.—He therefore concluded that those whom he had seen the night before had taken up their habitation entirely in the abbey.—He still, however, continued to keep a watchful eye on the building.

“ On the eighth day some confusion was experienced among the peasantry. A signor Balvolio, a physician, with officers of justice, and a servant of Percival Maferini, arrived at Montferrat, to search for him.—He had the night before, according to the servant's account, entered the abbey, while the man waited for him without ; who fell asleep, and did not awake till morning :—he then entered to look after his master, but his exertions proved fruitless ; he was no where to be found.—His foot-
steps

steps were traced to an apartment in the west tower; where also a picture which he wore next his heart, was found, the ribbon of which seemed torn by force; but from this room no other signs of him could be traced.

“Jasper was equally astonished and alarmed at this intelligence.—He had omitted to attend at the usual place the night before, having been extremely ill; he, however, contrived to be among those who entered with the strangers to search the building, and with them examined that very apartment of the west tower, where with me he had oft-times performed the usual ceremonies with the lamp.—He then, with the rest, left the abbey, and heard it agreed on, between the physician and officers, that the doors and outer gates should be left unlocked.

“On

“ On his return home he directly sent off a letter to me, acquainting me with these proceedings; but, unfortunately, I had, the day before the arrival of it at the place it was directed to, set off for another part of France; and Jasper, after some time, had the mortification to receive it again unopened.

“ In this interval he was, however, by no means idle,—and he determined, let the hazard be what it would, to go over the abbey himself at midnight.—He at the same time resolved to enter from the principal gates, being aware, did he attempt to pass the secret passage, there was hardly a doubt but he should be interrupted.

“ This scheme he carried into execution, and proceeded, well armed, with a dark lantern, to the hall.—He had not remained, in an obscure part of it,

it, above five minutes, before Enochio and two others came forth from that apartment; which proved they must have been in the subterraneous chamber, and consequently had ascended by means of the trap.—These men had, all three, lamps,—and, shortly after, they were followed by a figure of noble mien, muffled up in his cloak, and his hat, in which was a white feather, flapped over his eyes.—But how was Jasper astonished, when, by the light of one of their lamps, which glared on his countenance, he discovered the features of D'Ollifont!

“ Being now more fully convinced that the most horrid treachery and villainy was going forward,—though every moment in danger of being discovered, he persisted in following them at some little distance.—They proceeded slowly through the iron gate that leads to the
ruins

ruins of a once magnificent place of worship, and walked to the centre, on which part stands a tomb to the memory of a monk, who in former times was a superior of this abbey.

“ One of the men having put down a small basket, covered lightly over with a cloth, which seemed to contain some provision, they all four entered the tomb.—But it was impossible for Jasper to follow them here also; as the size would hardly have admitted five persons to keep far enough apart in it to prevent discovery.

“ He heard a kind of noise which plainly told they were opening a large trap, and it seemed to require the exertions of three of them.—He heard D'Ollifont speak :—‘ Take down the provisions; I will remain here.—Leave the basket, and say nothing.’ Jasper supposed

supposed they did so ; for, after some little time, he heard them replace the trap ; and they passed by him as they returned to the apartment from whence they came.

“ He immediately, by the same method he had entered, quitted the abbey, shocked at what he had been witness to, and entirely at a loss in what manner to act.—He knew himself to be entangled by a promise of secrecy, similar to that of mine, on which terms only I had been suffered to make him my confidant ; but yet he was certain, as well as myself, that it did not prevent our aid or assistance to any one distressed or confined in the building ; or our exertions to frustrate any plans of wickedness or cruelty which the count might form, provided we did not discover those circumstances in which we were involved relative to the light, &c.—Our situations

situations were both extremely delicate ; and though we would have risked our lives in the service of the unfortunate, yet we could not but recollect with horror, the forfeiture incurred by the breach of an awful oath.

CHAPTER XL.

“JASPER at length fixed on a scheme, which effectually confirmed his wishes to serve the unfortunate, by the courage and ingenuity he displayed in the execution of it.—He determined to let the much-injured Percival Maserini know (if such a person there was in the abbey,—a circumstance of which he had little if any doubt) that there was one who was acquainted with his unhappy situation, and pitied him,—nay, would run all hazards to assist him to escape, if he could contrive any stratagem that carried in it the least prospect of success. Words to this purpose he wrote on a sheet of paper,
—at

—at the same time mentioning he would attend in the tomb the next night, at an early hour, before the usual attendance of D'Ollifont and his assistants ; a feeble hope inducing him to think they might converse together, though with difficulty.

“ A sudden idea now struck him, which had nearly over-ruled his present determination.—Why not immediately apply to the civil power, whom he could at once lead to the place of confinement ; and, by proof, crush D'Ollifont and the wretches concerned ? —The pen dropped from his hand :—he rose with joy at the thought.—Hesitation and reflection again stopped him :—he knew not how I would have acted in this case.—Strong as were his suspicions, they were as yet but suspicions ; should he make them publicly known,—and, at this crisis,

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should they fail, (which, though entirely improbable, was not actually an impossibility) it was uncertain in what state he might involve both himself and me.—But this might, at least, be done at the last extremity,—and in two days more he expected I should return.

“ In short, he proceeded as he had before intended, and accordingly finished his note,—not without, however, mentioning, at the latter part, hints of the disagreeable ties that entangled him with D'Ollifont.—Another consideration now interrupted him :—he wished to sign a name, but not either his own or mine ; that, in case the letter should be discovered, it might not, at the first instant, be apparent who was the author of it.—After some little time he wrote at the bottom, ‘ Father Peter,’ that it might be supposed to be some holy man, who, disdaining the idle talk
rela-

relative to the abbey, had made it a place for his meditations, and had consequently discovered what was going forward.

“ Jasper, at night, attended at a particular spot in the chapel.—In a short time he heard them enter, but could not perceive D'Ollifont.—One of them, whom he had noticed the night before, he now discovered to be Eburne.—They immediately walked to the tomb, and followed each other in; the basket, as on the former night, was slightly covered with a cloth, and put down on the outside of the door, while they removed the trap.—Jasper now saw the opportunity he wished to make use of; and while they were busily employed, he advanced, turned the cloth on one side from the top of the basket, thrust the paper down among the provision, and replaced the covering

as he found it.—In less than a minute after he had returned to his hiding-place, one of them came forth, and took it away:—he soon after heard the trap closed; and, again passing him, they returned, as he supposed, to the subterraneous room; while he left the abbey, elated, in some degree, with the success of his scheme.

“ The next night arrived; and Jasper, with another letter, repaired, as soon as it was dark, to the chapel, with a palpitating heart for the issue of his undertaking. — He entered the tomb, put his mouth to the trap, which, with some trouble, he found; then called several times, but received no answer:—he repeated the name of Maferini still louder, till he was afraid he had discovered himself to D'Ollifont's party.—Soon after, he thought he heard a kind of groaning from below ;

low; but it was indistinct and faint :— in short, he was now certain the cell was so low, it was impossible to exchange words with any one beneath.— His disappointment, however, did not abate his perseverance; and he now waited to place his note, in which he had related the regret he felt at not being able to hear him; and, after begging him to support himself with fortitude, he declared his intention, if every scheme failed, to apply to the magistracy of the place.

“ The men, as usual, approached : but D'Ollifont was again absent. One of them carried the basket :—unfortunately, he did not place it before the door, but took it with him into the tomb; in consequence of which, Jasper was unable to send the paper he had got ready.—After they left the chapel, he departed from the abbey,

overwhelmed with chagrin and distress at the failure of his enterprise.—The next morning brought the letter which he had wrote to me, back again, with information that no such person could be found at the place where it was directed.—He immediately dispatched another, which found me at B * * *.

“ One more night he resolved to try if Fortune would favour him; and he determined, should she not, to run all hazards, and apply for justice the following day.

“ He was just going to leave the house, when he observed three men lurking about, as if watching it; he therefore waited some little time before he set off.—About half an hour after, he perceived they were gone; and accordingly, walked towards the abbey.—He had but just arrived at one
of

of the solitary avenues leading to the principal gate, when the same three men, as he supposed, rushed from behind some thick foliage of cedar, and demanded his money.—They, however, waited for no answer, but knocked him down:—they then rifled his pockets; and, after giving him several blows on the head, and stabs with a dagger in the side and breast, left him, doubtless with an idea that he was dead.

“ In this state he continued till morning, when he in some degree recovered his senses, though unable to move, and almost to speak.—His situation was dreadful:—there was little chance of any one passing that way, it being so near the abbey; and he seemed to be in such a state that he could not possibly survive many hours.

“ Providentially, however, after a considerable length of time, a peasant ventured into the path, after a strayed mule; he at first attempted to run at the sight of Jasper’s figure, conceiving him to be something supernatural; but his feeble voice soon convinced the man, who stood at a little distance, that he was a mortal.—He immediately came up to him; but the exertion he had used in striving to make him hear, had now rendered him speechless.—The poor fellow, who saw and pitied him, directly ran for another man to help; and they carried him between them to the peasant’s cottage.—After some little time he was recognised, and they sent to the servants at the villa, to acquaint them with the accident.

“ Proper assistance was procured:—in about eight hours he recovered his speech; but yet the physician gave no hopes

hopes of his life.—In the course of four days his wounds appeared more favourable, and his fever considerably abated,—yet still he continued delirious at intervals.—In the course of six more days, he recovered his senses entirely, and was pronounced out of danger.—He now sat up some hours every day, and seemed to gain strength as fast as could be wished ; and the following week, which was the time of my return, he left his chamber, though extremely low.

“ In this state I found him, and heard from him the events which had happened in my absence.—I leave you to judge of my feelings and my situation.—There was not a doubt, in my opinion, but that the villains who robbed and so cruelly used Jasper, were some of D'Ollifont's gang, who knew of his intrusion into the abbey, and de-

G 5 terminated

terminated to keep him away for some time, if not to murder him.—I therefore resolved, however hazardous it might be, to go to the abbey that night, though Jasper was unable to accompany me :—this resolution, I must own, was rash : but I thought not on the danger ; my passions were worked up to the highest pitch.

“ Soon after it was dark, I repaired to the cave ; nothing was altered since my last visit.—I proceeded along the subterraneous passage :—all was silent, and gloomy.—In the same manner I ascended to the room ; not an article appeared to be moved.—I rose from the trap to these apartments :—I could hear nor see nothing ; every thing seemed to show not a soul had entered it since myself :—I, at length, even began to conceive doubts whether Jasper’s tale did not proceed from a disordered

dered imagination.—I walked slowly to the gates of the chapel; and, stopping a few moments, shuddered involuntarily at my own ideas.—The horridly desolate aspect of every thing around me encouraged the dismal train of thoughts that struck on my mind.—I shook off this weakness, and walked directly to the tomb; where I was soon convinced of the truth of Jasper's report, by finding the trap, which answered every description he had given me.—I was, however, incapable to lift it up,—and, having fully satisfied myself that the place was now clear, returned home.

“The next day, I acquainted Jasper with my visit; and we both conceived there was not a shadow of doubt but the unfortunate Percival Maferini had been made away with, during the illness of Jasper.

“ In the course of a week Jasper was able to attend me to the abbey, and we proceeded together to the tomb. — We both exerted our strength, and soon opened the trap, which discovered a flight of narrow stone steps, by which we descended to a considerable depth, and at the bottom entered a small square cell, arched over at top. — This place was entirely clear, — nor could any signs of murder be discovered, till Jasper (as we were leaving of it) by chance stumbled over a dagger, clotted with blood, partly dried, and in some few places begun to rust. — This, I resolved, should for the present remain where it was ; and, after we had performed the ceremony with the lamp in the west tower (according to my oath, which I strictly adhered to), we returned, shocked at our efforts being frustrated, relative to discovering the

the manner in which Percival Maferini had been treated.

“ For about a month I was undetermined in my conjectures on these circumstances, and considerations in what manner to act.—Every law of nature and justice, however, seemed to demand I should, if possible, make what intelligence I had received known, and bring D'Ollifont to account, on the charge of Jasper.

“ My resolution to this purpose had not been fixed above a day, when the poor fellow was taken ill with a relapse of the fever, that had before been caused by his wounds : and one of these wounds which he received on the breast, and which he had taken less account of than the rest, now showed signs of mortification. Advice from every part near was sent for ; but their
con-

consultations proved of no avail ; for, in less than a week, I saw him breathe his last, in a state of insanity.

“ Every idea of bringing D'Ollifont to justice now vanished, — and the death of this faithful servant preyed on my spirits (which, though bad at the time of my leaving Spain, had gradually grown worse ever since), infomuch that, at this period, it almost affected my senses at certain times.—Still it was a kind of melancholy madness, which was of short duration in its intervals ; and, consequently, could not be discovered, but by the few persons who were continually with me,—and they took no notice of it, as they apprehended no ill consequences from it on my behaviour, which was neither frantic nor outrageous.

“ Seven months elapsed under these
circum-

circumstances; during which time I received two letters from my daughter, who informed me of the tenderness and affection of her husband,—of his settling his affairs as quick as possible, to return with her to me in Italy, (a period she most sincerely longed for) though she supposed it would be deferred, on account of an addition to their party, in the person of a near relation to myself.

“ This intelligence, at two different times, gave me the most sincere pleasure and happiness.—Like a poor shipwrecked mariner, I looked forward through a gloomy prospect to a little glimpse of returning comfort.—Alas! that glimpse was soon extinguished, and I arrived at the crisis of my misfortunes. — At the end of near five months’ expectation after the last letter I had received, another came from his
lord-

lordship,—who, in the most soothing manner, (though himself, by the appearance of his writing, nearly distracted) informed me of the death of my Lucretia, in child-birth; the infant, which was a girl, having survived.

“Excuse these tears,” said the old man.

After a pause of some minutes, while he seemed stifled with grief—
“Look on them,” said he, “not as the effects of womanish ideas, or a superannuated mind; but consider them as indicating one worn down by the rod of adversity, till fortitude itself seems to forsake him, and remembrance even yet fills his eyes with drops of anguish,—of regret.”

CHAPTER XLI.

ALFRED, lord Milverne, and Matilda, venerated the grief of the hermit too much to interrupt his sorrow, which, after a few minutes' indulgence he overcame, and continued his narrative.

“ This intelligence, as I before observed, brought me to the very crisis of my misfortunes ; and the delirious fits I laboured under became more frequent, though not more violent.—My ideas were tinged with a kind of misanthropy, which every day increased, and served to encourage horrid thoughts that had never before gained the least ascendancy over me ;—and the result of what I felt was a wish (though I shrunk from it with affright) to put an
end

end to my own existence.—But the gloom of my mind becoming each day more terrible, worked up every evil influence with double strength.—Pernicious arguments floated in my brain; they seemed to say I could not do wrong in ridding myself of a burdensome life.—In short, in less than three months, I came to the dreadful determination of drinking poison.

“ I had seen no company whatever since the last news from England, but a reverend father belonging to a neighbouring monastery, with whom I spent some hours when perfectly collected; but I had, for the last month before I took this resolution, seldom even seen him. My heated imagination prompted me to ask him to dine with me the very day I resolved to commit the crime.—In my victuals, at that meal, I intended to mix a quantity of the poisonous

sonous drug I had already procured.—It is necessary, however, to inform you, that, at this period, I was partly insane, though possessed in some degree of recollection.

“ The day arrived ; and father Phineas, by appointment, waited on me.—We began dinner, and (I even now tremble at the idea), before it was finished, I executed the dreadful project, and took, with a seeming calmness, the tinctured food.—I immediately turned our discourse on the subject of religion ; knowing I had only a few hours to live, I wished to be satisfied in some points which my disordered intellects had latterly made me doubt.

“ The good man answered my questions with solemnity and truth.—In the course of his observations, he treated on suicide :—I involuntarily shuddered.

With

With a steady firmness, which I shall never forget, he spoke on the horrid act, and the eternal punishment that awaited it.—I turned pale; my lips trembled with convulsive terror at the idea of what I had done, and drops of perspiration fell from my face.—Father Phineas observed these emotions, and inquired if I was ill.—The greatest alarm prevailed over his features; he guessed the cause; but delicacy forbade him to mention it, for fear his conjectures should be wrong.—After a few moments I burst into an agony of tears, and confessed myself guilty of the deed, that would (as he had clearly explained) produce everlasting destruction.

“ He hardly heard the confession, but darted like lightning from the room.— In less than ten minutes he returned with a medicine which he had procured

procured at a relation's of his, who resided near.—I immediately took it; but there was great doubt whether it would take the wished-for effect, as I had swallowed the poison some time.—The agony I suffered, in doubtful suspense and horror for half an hour, could not be balanced by all my griefs put together; momentarily expecting dissolution, with no hope of forgiveness hereafter.

“ At length I brought from my stomach the dreadful poison :—the operation was violent; and, when over, I found myself unable to stand; the servants were therefore informed by father Phineas, that I had suddenly been taken ill.—I was accordingly conveyed to my bed; nor was any one ever acquainted with the real nature of the case, he having made an excuse even in procuring the medicine.

“ In the morning, after some hours' sleep,

sleep, I found the good man at my bedside; his manner was now severe, and I received from him a sharp though affecting rebuke; when, after having joined with me in a thanksgiving for my escape, he departed, and I remained alone the remainder of the day.

“ An inclination which I had before imbibed at intervals, now assailed me with redoubled force; it was a wish to retire entirely from the world, and live secluded and unknown, in the cave which led to Grasville Abbey:—by this I should at once gratify my own desire, and (if possible) more strictly adhere to my oath, which I now more and more, as my health became impaired, considered as a duty to my God.

“ The next day I communicated the thought to father Phineas, who at first attempted to dissuade me from it, but
at

at last agreed that it was a resolution in some degree necessary, as a penance for the crime I had been guilty of.—I determined that no one, except himself, should know of my retirement; and between us the following scheme was therefore contrived.

“ I gave it out among my household, that I intended to travel again to France, on account of my health; and, if I found the climate agree with me, might perhaps continue there some years, or entirely settle for the remainder of my life.—My domestics were therefore ordered away at a certain time.—I, as was supposed, left the country; and my villa was sold by father Phineas.—At different times of the night he had conveyed for me various utensils and conveniences, to form the necessary articles of life, to the cave:—he likewise procured the dress,
&c.

&c. of a hermit ; and I took possession of my new abode, giving the whole amount that my villa and furniture sold for, to father Phineas, to distribute in charitable uses, besides a very handsome present for himself.

“ My sudden departure, and the melancholy state I had so long been in, was talked of for some time, after which I was partly forgotten, and seldom mentioned.

“ But it was necessary our proceedings should not stop here : and, in the course of six months, father Phineas, (who visited me daily) by my desire, spread the report of my death at Paris, and wrote a letter to D'Ollifont, who was then in Spain, to the same purport ; mentioning it was my request, when living, that, after my decease, information of it should be sent him.

“ Whether

“ Whether he believed the account, I know not : but it is certain he might have been convinced to the contrary, had he taken the trouble to send and make inquiries in that city.—But, conceiving, I suppose, that there were already alarms enough concerning the abbey, to keep it free from intrusion, and that the principal person to contend with him was, by his diabolical arts, no more ; knowing that, even if it was searched, no material proofs could be brought against him, he thought my death rather a release than a misfortune, on account of the thorough knowledge I had of his character.

“ But, as if Providence favoured his villany, I could not bring myself to disregard the oath I had taken, so that his wishes still continued to be fulfilled.—You may, perhaps, wonder at my strict adherence to it : but you must consider

my situation; every trifle swelled in my imagination, which had now nothing to relax it; and my fervency of religion, in respect to repenting of the crime I had been guilty of in an attempt to take away my own life, every day became more violent; insomuch that my horror and misery increased, instead of lessening, the more I thought of its fatal tendency.

“ The good father constantly visited me during the remainder of his life, and regularly brought me food; but he has now been dead twelve years. After that period I was necessitated to go to the public market, and upon this account took the name of Father Peter, recollecting the signature which Jasper put to the letter he sent to Percival Maserini. — Time, and the disguise I was in, totally prevented me from being known. — I have, since my appearance at the town, received visits from some
of

of the peasantry, who have been more courageous, and more curious than their companions.

“I had now but one wish to be gratified, which was to see lord Albourne and his child, if living.—The good father had, by my desire, written to his lordship, some time after my retirement; but we received no answer.—He wrote again; but this letter proved as fruitless as the former. — His illness and death prevented a third from being sent: — the only conjecture I could form, to make me suppose both letters had miscarried, was that, in case of his lordship’s death, I should have received an answer to them by some one invested with the management of his affairs. — Father Phineas had transmitted all my money to a very respectable relation of his in France, an eminent banker, under a feigned name; and with this gen-

tleman was also placed my will, wherein I had bequeathed the whole of my fortune to Lord Albourne and his child, if living,—if not, to be divided equally among six convents in France, and a considerable sum to be given to the poor.

“ Lord Albourne, his child, and the recollection of almost every one that had been dear to me, in a great measure vanished from my mind, in the space of ten years. — Wholly absorbed in an enthusiastic mode of living, I became indifferent to every thing in the world, and obtained a serenity to which I had before been a stranger.—I kept a constant watch upon the abbey, though I did not enter it for sometimes six months together:—yet at these times I could see no one had intruded there since my last visit.

“ I remained in this state for near
twenty

twenty years, when, the second night, as I suppose, that you were at the abbey, —walking rather later than usual, meditating on the events of my past life, which seemed like a fleeting dream to my imagination,—my rêverie was suddenly interrupted by a glare of light from one of the windows on the east side of the building.—I stopped involuntarily; and a kind of horror I had long been a stranger to, crept through every vein.—I stood some minutes, as if fixed to the earth: but knowing I could do nothing then, I made the best of my way to the cave, though unable to sleep the remainder of the night, from the ideas that tormented me.

“ In the morning I rose, harassed and distressed.—I first determined, if possible, to seek out who and what the inhabitants were, as I could more easily find out the best methods to terrify them

from it, according to my oath, which I still resolved strictly to adhere to.—I went through the subterraneous passage to the room, and from thence ascended to the apartment above, the next to this, in which you were all four assembled.

“ I could not perceive the features of any person, but found you had taken up your residence here only two nights.—I determined to begin my operations without hesitation,—and, accordingly, the latter part of the evening of the same day, repaired to the west tower, and at midnight, in one of the casements, exhibited the lamp. This ceremony I performed the next night, and passed the window in a manner which I was certain must cause alarm, if I was seen.—Having done this, I returned to my cave, with scarcely a doubt but
I had

I had frightened the visitors from their abode.

“ I found, myself, however, mistaken; for the next morning, in the subterraneous room, I heard voices, but did not then ascend to the upper apartment. I attended rather earlier than usual at night, found you had not retired to rest, but were at supper. — I placed my lamp below, and waited above, though unable to observe any one, the folding doors being quite closed.

“ The night was stormy, (you, no doubt, well recollect it) and I afterwards regretted the uneasiness I had caused the female part of the company. — The behaviour of Mr. Maferini appeared strange and boisterous: — in short, I immediately conjectured he had been drinking freely. — The conception was, I believe, right; and I must con-

fess, at that time, it gave me no high opinion of his character. — In consequence of this idea, I did what I should otherwise, perhaps, have omitted.

“ On my first entrance, I heard him call for lights. — His sister in vain persuaded him to retire to rest; he swallowed several bumpers of wine after each other, with the avidity of a madman: — at length he called a name which struck me almost senseless. I uttered an exclamation of horror, which was drowned by a very loud clap of thunder that burst over the abbey at that time. — My flighty imagination, wounded by a degree of returning insanity, urged me to think that the name of my daughter was mentioned to hurt my feelings; and this vague thought spurred me to terrify the author of it with more than usual inclination. — The armour that had been thrown
down

down by Jasper at the time we were viewing the abbey with signor Ranolpho, had been gathered together, and placed in the subterraneous room.—I descended, and soon heard him drink to “the old ghost that inhabited the abbey;” upon which I directly pushed against the pile with all my force:—it fell to the ground,—and, as it did before, made a most violent crash.

“ I immediately ascended to hear what emotions it had caused.—I heard all in confusion:—every one seemed, by the noise, to have removed from their seats; upon which I immediately placed myself upon the trap, ready to sink on a sudden, if required.

“ Mr. Maferini uttered the name of his father—I groaned.

“ He heard it, and declared he
H 5 would

would find from whence it came: but some one seemed to hold him.—I repeated the groan.

“ Two persons approached the folding doors; they flew open:—I stopped just time enough to be seen, and then vanished.

“ Thus ended a night, no doubt, to you, of the greatest horror and distress, —to me, of the keenest anguish and reflection; which weighing on my mind, prevented the refreshment of sleep: —in short, the next day I was unable to leave my bed, or take any account of the abbey.

“ The following morning, as I was at my prayers, you all entered on me rather suddenly. I, as usual, prayed for the forgiveness of the sin I had been guilty of, in attempting to deprive myself

self of existence.—I had an uncommon oppression on my spirits; and tears, which I could not stifle, flowed at the recollection of events in the early part of life.—I turned my head, and observed four persons assembled round, two of whom bore so strong a resemblance to the picture of the late count Orlando Maferini, that, weak with indisposition, and overcome by my own ideas, I fell senseless on the floor.—Even on my recovery from this fit, I did not, I believe, rightly recover my scattered senses:—you took your leave, and promised to visit me the next day.

“ I supposed you were inhabitants of the abbey, and had but little doubt of your near relationship to the family of Maferini.—My very soul seemed to cling to you: but my oath again came to my imagination, and I dreaded even the very thought of breaking it. — I

considered, if I could but adhere to that, and still be of service to you, I might yet die with some degree of happiness.—At night, as usual, I displayed the light in the west tower, and afterwards returned to my cave.

“ According to promise, you were with me in the morning. — We discoursed on several subjects:—Mr. Maferini mentioned Grasville Abbey; I found myself confused, and thought I could also perceive symptoms of embarrassment and terror in the countenances of all. — Indisposition again prevented me from attending with the light in the west tower at night.—In the afternoon of the next day you visited me again, —and, no doubt, well remember our conversation.

“ I advised you not to enter the abbey. Mr. Maferini answered me rather warmly,

warmly, and I found myself hurt: he immediately apologised, and we parted. —I was again, at night, necessitated to defer the ceremony of the light, by an unexpected event which I shall hereafter make known.

“The next day you visited my cave; but I was absent on the business of the preceding evening.—At midnight, however, I displayed the light in the west tower, and could plainly perceive some one move with a lantern in the court below.—Supposing by this, that you were none of you then retired to rest, I conceived, that in a little time I might venture through the apartment where you slept” (turning to Matilda) “to one, which I have distinguished by the name of the state-chamber, which contains the beavers, feathers, &c. and which was formerly hung with black, to receive the corpse of Orlando count

Maserini,

Maserini, for the short interval of time before he was interred.

“ There is a door artfully concealed on one side of miss Maserini’s bed, which cannot possibly be discovered, on account of the tapestry that covers it :—this opening leads to a private passage that communicates immediately with the stairs of the west tower ; for I wished to get to the state-chamber, without appearing on the ground-floor of the abbey, where I naturally conceived you all were.—This door I softly unclosed.—I thought I heard a sigh, and my own feelings prompted me to answer it twice :—yet I ventured further, till I supposed the reflection of my figure with the lamp was seen in a large pier glass directly opposite to where I stood.—I heard a violent shriek, and hastily retired.

“ I knew

“ I knew the key of the cabinet in this room was placed by myself on the remains of a decayed column in the state-chamber.—I had fixed the silver chain, which was hung to it, to a marble hand, which I found by chance among the broken ornaments that lay about the different apartments; — the cap of the pillar, however, entirely concealed it from view. — I had examined this cabinet, and knew there was money, jewels, &c. in it, but never saw the manuscript. — The only account I can give for its being concealed there, is that it must have been found by one of the assassins in the abbey, who (not knowing the contents, by its being wrote, perhaps, in a different language from his own) carelessly placed it in an obscure drawer of the cabinet; and was prevented, probably, from robbing the other parts of it, by the dread of count D'Ollifont's resentment, or from
haste

haste in not examining any further than where he placed the paper.—Suffice it to say, that after Jasper's death, I found the key of it in the west tower; and taking only a superficial view of what it contained, fixed it in the manner and place I have before mentioned.—I wished to put you in possession of it, that, without violating my oath, I might in some respects assist you.—It was for this purpose I was going to the state-chamber, with an intention of moving it into Mr. Maferini's room.—Being fully convinced that all were retired to rest, I left the abbey, determining to put this scheme in execution the next morning.

“ I accordingly attended at an early hour, and walked directly to the concealed door; when, stopping a moment to listen, I heard Mr. Maferini and his sister in conversation, and found he resolved

solved to watch in the west tower that night.—I, at a particular part of his observations, interrupted him, by pronouncing three times, with an energetic voice, “Go!” to the inexpressible horror of both.

“A thought now entered my imagination, that I might bring every thing relative to the abbey, partly to a crisis, and still adhere to the vow I had made.—I resolved to let the key of the cabinet remain in the same place, and at night appear to Mr. Maserini, in the apartment of the west tower; conceiving that if his resolution failed him in point of seizing me and discovering the deception, I could find means to lead him to the state-chamber, and there discover to him the key.—This, though at first it may seem equivocal, I was certain would in no degree infringe on the general tendency of my oath.

“I en-

“ I entered the abbey at midnight, but stopped at least an hour in the lower rooms of the tower, before I made my appearance in the upper one. — At length, however, I ascended to it, by means of one of the same sort of traps which are contrived in the upper part of the building.

“ I stood before him about a minute ; but hearing some one on the stair-case, immediately, by the same means, vanished from his sight.

“ My scheme, in some measure, being frustrated, I made the best of my way to the state-chamber, through the private passage I have before mentioned : — wishing to regain the key of the cabinet, I wanted more light than my lamp, and accordingly lighted those tapers that were placed in the different glasses. — I had no sooner done this, than

than I heard some footsteps approach the door:—I immediately concealed myself behind the column that contained what I have before mentioned.—The voices, I found, were those of the inhabitants of the abbey.—The night was exceedingly stormy; and a kind of shock, similar to that of an earthquake, seemed to take effect on the room where we stood.—I availed myself of this circumstance, and immediately pushed the cap of the column down, which directly discovered the marble hand, and the key suspended from it.—Mr. Maserini, by these means, procured it.—I then came forward and stood on the trap, clasped my hands with ecstasy, and descended through the floor.

“ The next morning you all visited me:—I was looking over some papers, of infinite consequence to your welfare; but it was not then a time for discovery.

—I was,

— I was, if you recollect, suddenly taken ill, with a kind of fit I have for years been subject to : I prayed that my life might be prolonged till a mighty work was effected, which was, to procure justice for the murder of Percival Maferini, and restore his children to their rights.

“ I had no doubt but Mr. Maferini would again watch in the west tower that night ! and I accordingly appeared there in the same manner as before. — His behaviour answered my purpose ; he seized me, and discovered my person :—secrecy, in my ideas, was now at an end :—an explanation took place :— I however, put off a regular detail of events till another period, but gave him hopes of once more being restored to the world and happiness, in a manner that would at once wipe off every stigma that had so long defamed his character.

“ He

“ He visited me the next afternoon, but did not stop long, and only received from me further proofs that I had power and will to serve him. — I received another visit from Miss Maserini alone, at midnight. — My surprise may well be conceived : — the interview was occasioned by her finding of the manuscript. — I promised to wait on her in the morning, and explain every circumstance, as far as I was capable. — This promise I have now fulfilled by relating every principal event of my past life, which has been chequered with scenes of happiness contrasted with those of the most poignant misery and distress.”

Thus ended the hermit's tale, who, for an act of the greatest generosity to a villain, fell under the lash of the severest misfortunes.

A total inconsistency of conduct, however,

ever, may be observed through the latter part of his life,—occasioned, most probably, by a nervous constitution, entirely broken by adversity; for it was certainly strange that a man of enlightened understanding, and refined education, should so closely adhere to an oath, tyrannically (as it may be said) forced on him by an act of the blackest ingratitude and injustice; and at the same time reconcile himself to a premeditated plot of discovering his person; which he knew must consequently develop every transaction.

CHAPTER XLII.

MISCELLANEOUS OCCURRENCES.

“ The love of wicked fiends converts to fear;
That fear to hate, and hate turns one or both
To worthy danger, and deserved death.”

SHAKESPEARE, *Richard II.*

THE mist of doubtful horror, which had so long brooded over the apartments of Grasville Abbey, was now totally dispersed, and the gloom of superstitious weakness dispelled by the bright ray of truth and reason. — The inhabitants, in some degree, wondered at the fears that had assailed them; and could not, even for a moment, reflect on them, but with a mixture of contempt and vex-

vexation at their want of fortitude to withstand the shock of mere visionary terrors.

The baron Sampieno received the united thanks of the whole company for his recital; Matilda and Agnes dropped a tear at the misfortunes of the venerable orator. — A sensation, however, they had long been strangers to, of delight and comfort, ran through the whole assembly.—Every mystery, every supernatural idea, was elucidated to their satisfaction, and at once relieved them from that load of anxiety and distress they had so long encouraged by gloomy apprehensions.—In the course of the conversation, Matilda also understood that the answer she supposed to be given to her thoughts the night before as she entered the cave, was nothing more than an involuntary exclamation of the hermit's which (by the construction

struction of the place) echoed to the part where she stood, in a kind of whisper.

After having taken some refreshments, lord Milverne declared his intention of setting off to the residence of the magistrate, as the critical situation of Felix demanded that the banditti should be immediately apprehended.—It was resolved that Leonard should attend him, as, in some parts of the information, he might be useful.—They accordingly departed, and were not expected to return till the evening, as they would be necessitated to accompany the guards to the spot, and afterwards be present at the examination.

The baron now began, to Alfred and his sister, another narrative, which, though shorter, gave them nearly as much surprise and pleasure as the former.

One night, which he mentioned, neglecting to shew the light in the west tower, he was, at an early hour, called by a voice that he had somewhere heard, and which seemed to come from the outer part of the cave.—He immediately repaired to the spot, and perceived a man whose countenance he directly knew:—he was a peasant that had sometimes visited him, but who had latterly not so often attended, on account of the indisposition of a relation.—The man's features carried in them the utmost horror and affright, occasioned by three causes:—first, his relation was dying, as he supposed; secondly, though he had often called upon the hermit by day-light, he had never before ventured near his habitation after dark, on account of the path leading directly to the abbey, consequently was under considerable alarm; and, thirdly, that alarm was heightened beyond measure, by

by seeing a light in one of the casements of that building, which occasioned his calling on the hermit's name, being unable to proceed any further.

With breathless agitation the poor fellow related what he had seen, and then requested Father Peter would accompany him to his cot, as he was woefully afraid something lay heavy on the mind of the sick man that was there, who had expressed a wish to see a confessor: — none, however, being there to be found, he thought of Father Peter, and had even ventured, at that hour, to procure him.

The baron, after some hesitation, consented to go with him; and they accordingly walked to this man's home, where he was conducted to a room, in which, on a miserable bed, lay an emaciated figure extended, and seemingly

in the last state of consumption.—His face was of a deadly paleness; his cheeks, sunk to the very bone, were covered with a shrivelled skin; while those parts of his eyes which had once been white were turned to a kind of pale yellow:—his nose and mouth, which had been no bad features, now appeared predominant ones, owing to the thinness of his face; while in his whole person was painted anguish and remorse in the extreme, and a gloom at intervals, which showed all joy, all hope, had forsaken his soul.—What were the sensations of the baron, when this change, great as it was, did not prevent him from recognising the wretch Eburne!—Ah! and what were the sensations of that Eburne, when he beheld and recollected, under the garb of a hermit, the much-injured baron Sampieno!—He shrieked aloud, and hid his face below the bed-clothes.—The
cottagers

cottagers were astonished:—the baron desired they would leave the room; which they accordingly did.

After a few minutes, hearing every thing quiet, the wretched man raised himself; but the delirious fit he had laboured under for some days before, now returned with violence.—His black shaggy hair, discomposed by the efforts he had made to hide from his sight the figure before him, gave a double horror to his ghastly looks which carried in them every appearance of insanity.—He raved, called on the names of count Maferini and his children,—then the baron Sampieno,—wept, and, clenching his hands together, sunk on the bed, exhausted and fatigued.—The baron well knew it was useless to attempt to speak while this fit of a guilty conscience remained:—he was therefore a

silent spectator of the scene, and greatly affected.

After the violent ravings of Eburne had ceased, he lay panting on the bed, with his eyes fixed on a vacant part of the chamber.—The baron conceived this would be a good opportunity to address him :—he therefore drew near the bed ; but Eburne again shrunk from him, and put out his hand, as if struck with horror at his approach.—The good man spoke in the mildest terms, and begged he would be composed :—again the languishing eyes of the culprit were raised towards the venerable comforter ; and again he shrunk back, as if the figure brought to his mind ideas that rent his very soul.

Two hours elapsed, during which time the baron addressed him on several

veral topics relative to religion; and his disordered intellects gradually became more connected and regular, though he, almost every five minutes, gave a convulsive shudder, and a loud sigh of anguish and regret.

At length the baron promised to call on him the next day, and left the chamber.—He desired the cottager not to disturb his relation; but, at day-break, to send for the most eminent physician they could procure; and he would make up to them the expense.—With many thanks, they promised to do as he desired.—He accordingly left the cottage; and, it being considerably past the time of illumining the tower, immediately on his return to the cave, retired to rest.

The remainder of the night was spent in a train of melancholy reflections.

tions on this strange accident.—The sight of this man brought to his mind those scenes of felicity and happiness which he and his diabolical master had for ever blasted: yet, after the state in which he had beheld the miserable wretch, pity, in opposition to those reflections, entered his bosom; and those very scenes, as they the more confirmed his wickedness, seemed to draw from the benevolent heart of the baron greater concern and sorrow for his dreadful situation.—It was necessary, however, if Eburne survived till morning (which seemed rather doubtful), that he should be got into as composed a state as possible, and that by persuasion (if persuasion should be found necessary) he should do what justice he could to the offspring of that family which he most probably had aided to destroy.—The baron considered that he might be acquainted with the whole of
D'Olli-

D'Ollifont's transactions ; if therefore, he could be brought to give an explanation of them, his words might be taken down in writing ; and such a confession (if it could be proved by respectable witnesses who could answer for his being in a state of sanity) would nearly tend to answer every wished-for purpose.

Such were the baron's thoughts ; and at an early hour he repaired to the cottage. A physician of some eminence was already arrived :—he gave but little hopes of the patient, but said he might probably survive a few days.—Eburne had enjoyed considerable sleep for some hours, and seemed perfectly calm.—The physician departed, after promising to call again in the evening.

The baron now took the man who

I 5

belonged

belonged to the cottage, on one side, and requested to know what relation Eburne was to him.—The man answered, he was a cousin of his wife's ; they had always understood he led a very wicked life ; nor had any acquaintance been kept up between them for many years, till about six months past, when he came to their cottage, very much distressed in mind, and labouring under every symptom of a decline.—He fully confessed to them that he had been a most abandoned character, and claimed their pity.—The cottager and his wife accordingly admitted him into their house ; but, as his health gradually grew worse, his melancholy increased.—He, however, made his will, and left them the whole of the little property he was possessed of.

“ Last night,” continued the man,
“ he was suddenly taken much worse than
we

we had ever before seen him (though he has at times been deranged in his intellects for some days past), and begged I would bring him a confessor :—I accordingly set off for father Leolin ; but I found he was some miles from Montferrat.—I then thought your presence would answer the same purpose.”

The baron desired the cottager to go into the chamber of the sick man, and mildly inform him that Father Peter had called to see him ; that he would give him no uneasiness, but rather comfort and consolation.

The man did as he was desired, and in about five minutes returned. “ Eburne,” said he, “ is perfectly sensible, and wishes to see you :—but I am sure there is something strange about him ; for, when I only mentioned your name, he started, as if afraid of being murdered.”

The baron entered the room alone. — Eburne again convulsively shook at the sight of him; but, being addressed by the mild and condoling voice of the visitor, he so far recovered as to look on him, and listen to what he said, without any violent emotions.

The baron, after an hour's conversation with him, which seemed entirely to compose his mind, conceived he might venture on a topic it was before impossible for him to mention, concerning the murder of Percival Maserini, and also of those doubts relative to the count his father. — He opened the subject with such caution and mildness, that, though the remembrance might be seen to work in every feature of Eburne's face, he did not fall into any fits of insanity, but continued perfectly collected during the whole of the interrogation.

At

At the close of it, he heaved a sigh of the most acute anguish and horror, and in some measure relieved his bursting soul by a flood of tears.—At length he recovered so far as to speak, and declared that Orlando, count Maserini was poisoned ; and that Percival Maserini, his son, was assassinated in Grasville Abbey, after having been kept there a prisoner some little time :—“ and, however,” said he, “ I may break the oath I have taken, I can no longer conceal the murderer :—it was my late master, the count D'Ollifont.—But,” continued the unhappy man, “ I am equally culpable with him.—I was privy to both transactions, and to every plot of villany he was concerned in, particularly that by which you were so great a sufferer.—Oh, my God !” he exclaimed, clasping his hands in agony, “ thou only knowest what are my sufferings. —It

—It is thou only canst conceive the pangs which drive me to madness.

He was near fainting :—but the baron administered a cordial, which soon recovered him. — He now informed Eburne that there was one essential way of atoning for his guilt ; and that was to do justice to the descendants of the deceased ; for this purpose it was necessary, as his life was uncertain, that a paper should be drawn up, declaring the facts relative to both murders, which in a court of justice would be certain to crush the wretch that was the cause of them, and give to the children of the injured those possessions they had so long unlawfully been deprived of.— Eburne gladly and immediately consented to the proposal, and the more particularly so, when it was explained to him that the breaking of an oath in such a case could not be deemed an act of wicked-

wickedness, or be disapproved of by the Supreme.—The baron then drew up a paper containing all the circumstances which were related to him by Eburne, before father Leolin, who was now arrived, and acquainted with the affair.

In the evening the physician arrived ; and before him and the cottager, Eburne signed the paper ; declaring it, on oath, to be the truth of every transaction it contained.—Eburne seemed considerably better, and after some little time the whole company departed ; the baron taking possession of the paper, which was the same he was looking over when visited by the inhabitants of the abbey.

The confession it held forth was partly as follows :—That he was taken into the service of D'Ollifont when very young, shortly after that gentleman com-

commenced gambler in Spain.—He was soon distinguished as his confidential servant, and assisted him in most of his defrauds :—that they led that kind of life till his master's character was well known in those parts, where he resided for some time :—that they were necessitated to fly to the place where the baron Sampieno and his family resided, and, knowing his riches, determined, if possible, to make him a dupe to their artifice ; insinuating himself into the baron's family, though he bore a deadly hatred to that nobleman :—This hatred he resolved to gratify by a diabolical scheme of malice and villany.—He determined to take away by force Lucretia, the baron's only daughter ; and, by ruining her honour, to make a public disgrace and ignominy fall upon her father, which he knew would more effectually blast his happiness than any pecuniary fraud he could invent.—This
scheme

scheme was frustrated by the baron's over-hearing a conversation which he and his master had on that subject ; but which gave rise to another opportunity for D'Ollifont to execute a second fiend-like contrivance, which tended to the same horrid purpose, and which, if possible, exceeded the former one in ingenuity and contrivance.

The manner and issue of this horrid plot against the baron was related by himself, and the success of it answered but too well.

Eburne confessed in the testimony, that he was the person who found means to bury some of the false notes in the baron's garden, and who, by D'Ollifont's orders, bribed one of his servants to their interest.—He attended his master to Italy, where the old count Maserini was extremely alarmed,
on

on account of a report which had been spread concerning his children, who had been some time in France.—He had been informed that Pervival, his son, had contrived to rob the convent of N***** of a young lady of family and distinction, and that both, with his sister, had fled.—This report seemed the more to be credited, as an interval of some time had passed since the count had heard from them.

The old gentleman was extremely ill on the arrival of his nephew, but testified great pleasure at seeing him, having never heard of his misconduct.—He slowly recovered; and D'Ollifont was dispatched to procure some further intelligence of his children.—It was during this journey that he made Eburne acquainted with his intentions, and promised him large rewards if he succeeded.—They returned to the abbey with
a feigned

a feigned letter, which gave information that Percival Maferini and his sister were no more; that the former fell by the hand of an officer who was going to secure them,—and that the latter, in a fit of insanity, had poisoned herself:—the letter concluded with saying that lady Clementina was confined in the Bastile, on a suspicion of having murdered her sister, who was found dead in her bed the morning after the elopement from the convent.

The grief of the count was excessive, and brought on a relapse of his former disorder;—and this, added to a slow poison, which Eburne procured, and which D'Ollifont mixed with every small quantity of food he partook of, put an end to his existence, without any signs of murder being committed.—The count made a will about two days before he died, in which he bequeathed

queathed the whole of his estates and property, except a few legacies, to his nephew.—Eburne, by his master's order, gave it out the abbey was haunted; and, the better to make this believed, D'Ollifont himself left it suddenly in the night, after the funeral of his uncle. He returned immediately to Spain, and left orders that nothing should be moved from the abbey.

Eburne, however, was left behind, though it was supposed round the country that the abbey was entirely free from inhabitants. — He each night showed the light in the west tower, and secretly employed three mechanics to put the traps and machinery in order. — These works he superintended; and finding one of these men, whose name was Enochio, fit for his purpose, retained him, by D'Ollifont's desire, to reside in the subterraneous chamber, and show
the

the light, while Eburne departed for Spain, to come forward on the trial on baron Sampieno.

Eburne also confessed that the passage which formed a communication between the abbey and the cave, the traps, &c. were found out by himself, and the secrets conveyed directly to his master, from whom he received a considerable present.

The paper next contained an account of the terms to which the baron consented, to save the life of himself and daughter, which the reader has before been acquainted with; also an account of D'Ollifont's entering into a society of depredators while in Italy, whose birth and situation in life were all above the common rank, and whose defrauds were carried to the most considerable amount on people of rank.—It was at
one

one of their places of rendezvous, at Genoa, where the baron was introduced to D'Ollifont, at the time he took his oath.—After that conference, the latter departed to Spain; but Eburne still remained concealed, as his agent in Montferrat, a watch upon the baron, and every circumstance which concerned the abbey.—He sent him information that Percival Maserini was actually arrived; though, by D'Ollifont's orders, several men were placed on the roads to assassinate him.

Immediately that the keys were delivered in Spain, he set off from that country and secretly arrived at Montferrat, where he kept concealed in the subterraneous room, with Eburne, Enochio, and three men whom he had hired.—It has before been mentioned that the baron was absent many miles; which answered every wish of D'Ollifont: but
he

he did not know that Jasper was left behind.—The resolution of this party was to seize Percival Maferini and his servant, should they search the abbey alone; which it was rather expected they would.—Enuchio and the three men were dispatched in the day-time, about three miles round the spot, each taking different roads, and met at the cave at an appointed hour at dark.

It was about the fifth night, when, after one of these excursions, Enuchio brought word that Percival Maferini, whom he personally knew, with his servant, had just called at an inn for some refreshment; and, by their manner, he judged they were coming to the abbey, as they did not seem inclined to stop, as it was now late.

Every thing, therefore, was prepared; Enuchio and two of the men were
planted

planted in the west tower.—Eburne and another man were concealed in the hall; and the count himself waited the issue of the scheme, in the tomb, in which the unhappy victim was to be shut up.—He entered the abbey, agreeable to their expectations, even unattended by his servant; and crossed the hall without any interruption.—Eburne being now certain he was within their power, he and his companion joined the count, while the unfortunate Percival ascended to the west tower.

On his entrance, he was immediately seized by the ruffians:—in the struggle a picture of his wife was torn by force from his bosom, with a part of the ribbon; and several drops of blood, proceeding from a blow which he received in the [face, stained the floor:—these were discovered by Edward, his man, when he made a search after his master

in

in the morning; and also by signor Balvolio, the officers of justice, and other persons, who attended the abbey for the same purpose afterwards. — Percival Maferini was conveyed down to the cell described by the baron, and discovered by Jasper; and a short allowance of food was given him each night.

A few days after, Jasper was discovered to be left behind in Montferrat; and it was determined he should be made away with, or at least so far hurt as to prevent any interruption from him. — Eburne and two of the men assaulted him in one of the private avenues leading to the front gates, and left him for dead.

The next night, it was resolved between Eburne and his master, that a period should be put to the life of their wretched prisoner, for fear of the

baron's return. D'Ollifont, however, did not wish any one of the men to be privy to the actual commitment of the murder:—Eunchio and the others were therefore discharged with large presents, and, by his desire, departed to Spain:—there they were seized, through the agency of an alguazil with whom he was connected, put on board a ship of war, and fell in the first engagement.

At midnight D'Ollifont, with his own hand, stabbed his cousin Percival Maserini; Eburne being unable to perpetrate this last deed of darkness, though he assisted:—poison was at first offered the unhappy man; but, on refusing to take it, he received the wound which at once released him from a wretched existence.

Eburne and his diabolical employer buried the body near the tomb, in a grave

grave which had been prepared in the day; and then, placing every thing in the abbey as it was before they came, departed, and in disguise returned to Spain.

Here Eburne received a considerable sum from D'Ollifont, and remained in his service about six months; when he was one night suddenly seized, and carried on board a similar ship to that in which his companions were conveyed; but, fortunately, did not meet with the same fate.—He escaped from the crew, after twelve months, and entered into service in France; being deterred from making public what he knew relative to the count, on the idea of the strong oath he had taken to the contrary.—He had not a doubt but it was through his means he was, by force, taken from Spain: and his very soul recoiled against

K 2

him,

him, for those very schemes he had aided him in executing.

He was driven from France, by hearing of D'Ollifont's arrival there, and crossed over to England, torn with remorse, and harassed by a guilty conscience.—He was often tempted, in defiance of the oath he had taken, to impeach his late master; but the doubt how such an accusation might be received from him, against one who was every day growing more popular in Paris, prevented this act of justice.—He resided in England some years, as servant to a private gentleman; but was again necessitated to fly, on being informed that D'Ollifont was there likewise; dreading the power and inclination he had to rid the world of one who was privy to so many of his crimes.—He therefore made the best of his way
back

back to France, and from thence soon returned to Italy, where he made himself known to his relations, and claimed their pity ; finding his health totally declined, and his mind loaded with horror, anxiety, and bitter remorse.

To this purport was the paper which the baron now delivered to Alfred Maserini:—it was a precious gift; for it would most likely tend, with correspondent evidence, to subdue the inveterate and malicious foe of their family; while it procured them that comfort and affluence which they had so long been deprived of.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE baron further informed them, that Eburne in the course of two days so far recovered as to be able to sit up for some hours; but after his confession, he seemed to express such an impatience for his dissolution, as indicated his mind was in some degree disordered; and on the third morning after, he was discovered hanging by a cord which he had found means to procure from a part of his bed, and fixed to a hook in the cieling; thus adding another crime to the many he had already committed, by an act of suicide.

The conclusion of this man's life held
forth

forth a striking lesson of villany and cruelty ; his destroying of that existence which he had every reason to suppose had nearly run its course, confirmed at once how much he suffered from the horrors of a guilty conscience, and the effects of a truly vicious mind.

As there was now no doubt but the abbey, with all the possessions and estates belonging to it, was the sole and lawful right of Alfred and his sister, no scruples of honour could prevent them from making use of the money and other valuables that were in the cabinet : but as the baron considered that the whole business must go under a regular course of inspection before the government, and count D'Ollifont be brought in the face of his country to answer for those crimes which could now be partly proved against him (though the facts did not actually amount to demonstration),

K 4

tion), they conceived it would be better to let every article remain in the same place.

The baron insisted on their receiving from him supplies necessary for their present demands.—It was, he said, his intention, if possible, publicly to clear that part of his character, which had for so many years remained under the aspersions of a villain; and bring his accusations against D'Ollifont, on the foundation of Eburne's manuscript, which explained events relative to that affair, with as much accuracy as it did the circumstances respecting count Maserini and his children.

The baron wrote to his banker in Paris, who was possessed of his property, for remittances; giving him notice at the same time, that he should shortly appear in person, to demand the whole
of

of his fortune. — The old gentleman consented to the intreaties of Alfred and his sister to remain in the abbey, as they could easily have a bed made up for him in a chamber next to Alfred's.

In the latter part of the day, lord Milverne returned with Leonard and Felix: his lordship informed them that the banditti were taken, the men who had assisted him were singled out, released, and received from him a handsome reward, while the others were reserved for a public trial.—Lord Milverne had spoken to the magistrate (whose politeness was extreme) concerning Alfred Maferini's affairs;—he appointed to see him, with his lordship, the next morning, and promised to take every method in his power, to recover for them their just and lawful right.

His lordship was much surprised and pleased to hear the account of Eburne, and the manuscript they had got in their possession. — He congratulated them on the hopes of a very speedy end to their misfortunes: — nor was the baron less pleased to hear that his son-in-law Lord Albourne, and the daughter of his once beloved Lucretia, were both known to Alfred and Matilda. — Pleasure beamed in his countenance, when the former spoke of her with the rapturous praises of a lover.

Leonard on his return was dispatched with the letter. — In it the baron requested of his banker to remit him the sum for which he wrote, by the speediest conveyance. — Lord Milverne partook of Alfred's bed; another was made up for the baron, and a third contrived below for Leonard and Felix.

The

The happy party assembled at breakfast at an early hour the next morning; after which they employed themselves in taking a regular survey of the abbey; and the baron explained to them those pieces of mechanism it contained; which now fully accounted for the strange things they had been witnesses to. — They also descended to the subterraneous room, and from thence walked to the cave, from which all the articles that the baron wished to preserve, were carried to the abbey by Leonard and Felix.

Alfred, lord Milverne, and the baron, now set off for the magistrate, attended by Leonard. — Matilda and Agnes dined alone: and though the latter would sometimes survey the Gothic structure of the room, it was with that degree of pleasure and confidence, which confirmed how well she was satisfied that

every fear she had before encouraged was groundless.

“ I am now, mademoiselle,” said she to Matilda, “ happy indeed; and I may truly say that this happiness is increased by seeing all around me so: in short, I know nothing that could add to my present felicity, but” Here she stammered; the blush of true innocence glowed on her cheek, and heightened that pleasing simplicity which graced every feature.

Matilda guessed the cause of this embarrassment, and archly reminded her of Oliver.

The poor girl burst into tears—

“ Indeed, mademoiselle, though I own I love Oliver, yet even the presence of my poor mother, however she
may

may in some respects have treated me, would add to my present joy."

Matilda was struck with her gratitude, and commended it.

"Both your wishes, Agnes," said she, "shall, if in my power, be gratified. Your mother shall be reconciled to your marriage with Oliver, by my making him a present that shall give him importance enough to gain her good will."

"A thousand blessings on you, mademoiselle!"—I know not how to thank you, unless you will look on these tears as in some degree an acknowledgment for your goodness."

Felix now entered the room to take away the dinner things; which put an end to the conversation.

The

The latter part of the day, Alfred and his friends returned.—They brought with them two Italian women servants. One of the lower apartments was fixed on for their kitchen, and they slept in a small room next to Matilda's chamber.—The magistrate had given them every hope of a speedy issue to their cause.—By their orders he was the next day to send off an arrest against count D'Oillifont, to detain his person wherever found, on three several charges,—first, for the murder of his uncle the count Orlando Maferini,—second, for the murder of his cousin Percival Maferini, and unlawfully detaining the property of his heirs to his own use.

The third charge was in the name of the baron Sampieno, for false accusations, and defamation of character.

The

The magistrate informed them that the count's power in France was no more: he had offended the royal party by an attempt to assassinate one of their class, and in short was in every respect no more than a prisoner in the country, being afraid to leave it, though by no means wishing to remain there.

This gentleman's politeness was extreme; he offered the services of himself and lady to introduce them into public, under their proper names; which was now in many respects absolutely necessary.—The next day was appointed for Matilda to visit them.—The fore part of the following morning the baron proposed a walk to the cottage of Eburne's relations, as he conceived both Alfred and Matilda should be made known to them, as well as to the physician and father Leolin:—They accordingly visited those persons; and all
of

of them declared their readiness to come forward on their behalf.

After this walk they set off for signor Salvarino's, the magistrate's. — Agnes, however, declined the invitation to attend them, as it was her intention to see some things put in order by the servants, necessary for the reception of a large party, which Alfred had resolved to entertain before he left the abbey.

They were received by signor Salvarino and his lady with the utmost politeness:—some of the principal persons of the place were assembled, purposely to be introduced to the baron and the young recluses; and all testified their joy that the right heirs of the Maserini family were now likely to be restored to the possessions of their ancestors. — Alfred was informed that dispatches against D'Ollifont were already sent off,

off, and a regular process in their behalf commenced against him.—In the evening they attended a public place of entertainment, and received considerable applause from the audience; for their story had already spread through the principal part of Montferrat.

The following day was fixed on by signor Salvarino, the baron, and Alfred, for the settlement of some necessary circumstances relative to the suit in hand.—He waited on them at the abbey, and was taken all over it.—Every contrivance was explained to him; and he showed the greatest astonishment at what he saw.—The remainder of the day was dedicated closely to business.—Lord Milverne was absent on some of his own affairs.—In the evening, signor Salvarino took his leave, with an invitation to himself and lady, with most of the persons who were present at his house,

house, to spend the next day at the abbey.—The whole party accordingly met at the dinner-hour:—they surveyed the building, and received an elucidation to every mystery.—Agnes undertook to manage the entertainment; and it was conducted in a manner that did her infinite credit.

They now began to make preparations for leaving Italy, as their presence would shortly be absolutely necessary in France.—It was agreed that lord Milverne should cross over from that country to England, as he had some concerns to settle; and, at the same time make inquiries if lord Albourne and his daughter were in London, as they all conceived it probable he might return immediately after the accident of the fire at the inn.—Signor Salvarino procured them an elderly man and woman to look after the abbey, and reside there

there in their absence ; and in the course of a fortnight, they set off on their journey, with the two Italian servants whom they had hired.

Before their departure the baron received the sum he had wrote for from his banker, with a polite invitation to his house on their arrival at Paris.— They had also information that the arrest was executed against D'Ollifont, and that he was now a prisoner in his own house.

They travelled slowly, and arrived in France without any particular accident.— They engaged handsome apartments. Lord Milverne remained with them but three days, and then tore himself from the happy party ; not, however, without obtaining a promise from Matilda, to become his immediately on his return. — They also understood that
D'Ollifont

D'Ollifont had been confined to his bed some time, and had totally lost the royal favour.—Since his arrest he had often shown fits of insanity; and it was doubted by the physician whether he would survive to take his trial.—Signor Salvarino had given them letters of introduction to many persons of fashion and distinction in France; and those, added to their being known before, procured them admittance to the first parties.

Before their arrival, they were informed that the charge against Alfred was rescinded, even previous to the arrest against D'Ollifont. — They visited the baron's banker, who introduced them to the whole of his friends.

They had been in Paris about a week, when they one evening attended the theatre:—in leaving it, as they passed
through

through one of the passages, a gentleman before them, seemingly intoxicated in a small degree, was addressing himself to a young lady rather against her will, though personally he appeared to be known to her.—She had an elderly lady with her:—they were, however, before Alfred and the baron; consequently their faces could not be observed.

His importunities at length seemed to become exceedingly disagreeable, and his remarks carried in them some impropriety.—Alfred advanced, and declared the lady should not be insulted!—The gentleman turned round, and exclaimed with the utmost surprise, “Mr. Maserini!”—nor was Alfred’s astonishment less to behold Henry Peviquil.—The young lady turned pale at the name of Maserini, and sat down on a seat near; which gave Alfred an opportunity

opportunity to recognise lady Caroline Albourne, and the baron the picture of his departed wife and daughter, in the person of his grand-child.

Alfred, disengaging himself from the levity of Peviquil, ran to her assistance: but, before he could catch her in his arms, she had fainted in those of the lady who was with her, and who was totally unknown to both Alfred and his sister.

The baron and Matilda now advanced.—The former clasped the hand of the inanimate yet beautiful form; with ecstasy; but that ecstasy caused a tear to flow at the recollection of her mother. — A considerable crowd of persons were now assembled round:—a gentleman who stood by, invited them into a room in the interior part of the theatre; which offer they gladly accepted.

cepted.—Henry Peviquil, elevated with wine, yet haggard with dissipation, attempted to follow: but Alfred politely requested he would desist:—this he at last agreed to; but requested his address, that he might call and congratulate him on his return to France.—They accordingly exchanged cards, and he directly left the place.

Matilda privately intreated the baron that he would not discover himself to lady Caroline that night, as the present alarm had so greatly overcome her spirits.

Alfred hung over the charming invalid with a mixture of joy and concern. Her countenance was much altered since he had last seen her: though her beauty was not greatly diminished, yet it was of that delicate and languishing kind which plainly told she had suffered
the

the most heart-felt and poignant uneasiness. — He knew from Caroline Albourne's sincere and artless conduct, that she once loved him; but he also knew his character had suffered the severest shock in the opinion of her father. — She might now be the wife of another! — The thought no sooner darted on his brain, than its effects might be observed in every feature. — Lady Caroline recovered, and looked round with some surprise on the little party near her. — She clasped the offered hand of Matilda with pleasure; and her eyes spoke towards Alfred, more than she dared to utter.

She had accompanied her father, after the accident of the fire, into Italy; but remained there a very short time. — They then returned to France, as his lordship conceived the climate to agree with his constitution, which still seemed
on

on the decline.—The elderly lady who was with her, had resided in France all her life, and was a distant relation of lord Albourne's, at whose house his lordship now resided with his daughter.—They had heard of Alfred's arrival at Paris, with the information that the charge against him was withdrawn, and another of a very high and criminal nature brought by him against D'Ollifont.—But lord Albourne was now by no means satisfied with that part of his character which he had formerly been a witness to, in point of gambling: nor did he give his daughter the least hopes of a favourable alteration in his sentiments towards the young Frenchman.—Alfred wished them to permit him to attend them home; but this was absolutely refused, as they had their visitors and two servants in waiting.

Alfred, therefore, had only the con-
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solation of finding that she was still unmarried, and declaring, as he handed her to the carriage, that in a very short time the whole of his conduct would, he hoped, be explained to lord Albourne satisfactorily, and himself made the happiest of men, by being permitted to solicit of her that, the very thought of which had supported him through every misfortune.

The baron requested of the old lady his lordship's address, having business, as he informed her, of great importance with him the following day ; and, after a rather confused farewell, the whole company parted with still more confused ideas.

CHAPTER XLIV.

VARIOUS INTERVIEWS.

Alas, I'm fore beset!—Let never man,
For sake of lucre, sin against his soul.
Eternal justice is in this most just.

HOMER.

SENSATIONS of pleasure oft-times produce a train of reflections that bring with them the recollection of past scenes of happiness, and present to us former objects in which our very soul appeared entwined in one common existence, and the parting of which seems almost to separate ourselves.

So it was with the baron Sampieno, at the sight of lady Caroline.—He felt

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that

that enthusiastic glow of rapture which swells the veins of a parent at the recovery of a long-lost and beloved child : but reflection soon whispered that she was neither that beloved daughter nor wife whose figure still floated in his brain.—Every feature, every look of each of them, shone forth in the beautiful representative he had seen ; and the idea of what they were, followed, and called up those trivial scenes of endearment, which opened wounds that for a time had been healed by the balm of religious frenzy.

Immediately on his return home, he apologised to Alfred and Matilda, hurried to his chamber, and gave vent to those passions he had struggled to conceal. — The baron was possessed of a degree of fortitude by no means inconsiderable : he had courage and resolution,—a refined education and under-
standing,

standing,—and a noble heart.—Yet there was a constitutional weakness, a something in his disposition, which, by the generality of mankind, might be called a womanish defect,—but, by others, would be looked upon as one of the excellencies of human nature.—The regret, however, for the loss of his wife and daughter, did not lessen the tie which drew him towards his grandchild : he suffered that which can only be conceived by a person in a similar situation.

Alfred and his sister met him the next morning at breakfast.—His countenance was serene; yet melancholy :—still, however, they could perceive he anticipated the pleasure of clasping lady Caroline to his heart, and once more embracing his much beloved son-in-law.

Alfred, though he might wish to ac-
L 3 company

company him, immediately refused the invitation ; but the baron requested that Matilda would go with him.

At rather an early hour, they were introduced by madame Bosivi's servant to the breakfast-room, in which were seated that lady, lord Albourne, and his daughter.—Lady Caroline was at her harp, and his lordship listening to her harmony, while he took his chocolate.—All three rose at the entrance of the visitors, and madame Bosivi introduced the baron as the gentleman whom she had mentioned to his lordship the night before.

Lord Albourne bowed ; and, though he seemed rather struck with the countenance, did not recognise the person : —he, however, advanced, and took the hand of Matilda.

“ Believe

“ Believe me, miss Maferini,” said he, “ however unexpected this visit may be, the pleasure I receive from it is unlimited ; and I am sure Caroline will join with me in thanks for the honour you confer on us.”

Matilda bowed, and returned a suitable answer to this polite compliment.

During a short interval, the baron’s eyes were fixed, first on lord Albourne, and then on his daughter ; while madame Bosivi, who was the most disengaged of the party, thought she could perceive a likeness between the picture of the late lady Albourne that hung over the fire-place, and the stranger before her.

Each being seated, lord Albourne, turning to the baron, requested to know his business ; and while this request was made, as he more earnestly observ-

ed the features of the person to whom he was speaking, they seemed to make some impression on his memory ; and a something appeared to cross his mind, that occasioned considerable emotion.

The baron hesitated :—a kind of sympathy worked upon both ; and, while Matilda trembled with anxiety, lady Caroline and madame Bosivi looked at each other with the utmost surprise.—The baron, at length spoke.

“ I will not so much wrong your lordship, as even to suppose you have forgot some scenes at an early period of life ; the tendency, and I may say, happiness of which have, no doubt, stamped on your recollection some objects to whom you were then nearly allied, and in whose fortune you were much interested :—but I am far from being surprised that my face does not call these

these circumstances to your recollection, when I consider the alteration that time and misery have made in my person."

Lord Albourne heard no more:—he clasped the offered hand of the baron with an ardour that bordered on madness; and, as he lifted his eyes towards heaven, he heaved a heart-felt sigh, which, in some degree, relieved the fulness of his soul.

Lady Caroline and madame Bosivi still remained silent spectators of this affecting scene; though, with Matilda, they were rather alarmed at the situation of his lordship.

The baron received lord Albourne in his arms with a pleasure that partook of paternal love.—They were both unable to speak:—his lordship took the hand of his daughter, and present-

ed her to her grandfather.—Another affecting scene now took place, and the baron almost supposed he clasped the figure of his Lucretia.

After some time, he gave them a brief account of his life since that period which he termed the crisis of his misfortunes, — his parting with his daughter.

In the course of this relation he oft-times had occasion to mention Alfred, at whose name his lordship looked reserved, and lady Caroline with anxiety.

Though lord Albourne found him so much prejudiced in his favour, he could not forget events he had been witness to, which left behind them traits very injurious to his general character.—In the course of their conversation, they found that his lordship
had

had never received any letter from the baron ; but had for answer, to inquiries which he sent to Italy, that he was no more ; nor could he ever gain any further information.—To procure, however, some account of his father-in-law, was one reason, though known only to himself, that induced him to lengthen his journey into Italy ; but on his arrival there, finding his health worse, he left it rather precipitately.—During the short stay he made, he used every means in his power to find out some one who was acquainted with affairs relative to the death of the baron : but all proved ineffectual ; for he understood that he left his villa suddenly, and settled in France, where he died.—His lordship now gave up every thought of searching any further, and himself departed for Paris.

As a minute investigation concerning

L 6

Alfred's

Alfred's conduct could not very well be entered into before a third person, the baron agreed to lord Albourne's invitation to sup that evening with him; and, after many congratulations on both sides, they parted,—not, however, without a promise from Matilda, to spend the next day with them.

Alfred was informed of the proceedings of this visit, and was somewhat surprised and hurt at lord Albourne's doubts respecting his character being so difficult to be obliterated;—but a moment's reflection soon ended his astonishment; he knew his lordship had more than once seen him deeply engaged at play with men notoriously known as professed gamblers, and in every respect a disgrace to society.—The little pique he had at first conceived, now vanished, and he admired that particularity he had before condemned.

demned. — The baron attended his lordship at an early hour ; while Alfred and his sister spent the evening among a private party of friends.

The baron, on his return, mentioned that he had removed every objection lord Albourne had entertained against Alfred Maferini, and that he had brought him an invitation to accompany Matilda and himself the next day, to dine with his lordship.—With heartfelt joy he returned the old gentleman a thousand thanks, who now declared he must shift for himself, relative to any other wish he had to gratify through the reconciliation.

The next day Alfred had the felicity to be received with the cordiality of sincere friendship by lord Albourne, the utmost politeness by madame Bosivi, and
in

in a manner that answered his most sanguine expectations by lady Caroline.

They parted at rather a late hour, with an appointment for lord Albourne, madame Bosivi, and lady Caroline, to spend the next day but one with the baron, and, as he was pleased to term them, his adopted children. — Alfred obtained permission to call at madame Bosivi's the next morning, to inquire after their health, and, as lord Albourne laughingly added, to sigh away an hour with Caroline.

They found, on their return home, Henry Peviquil's card, which mentioned he should call on them the next day. — Tirefome as his company might be to them, common politeness dictated they should receive him. — At a late hour, the figure of the once elegant and handsome Henry Peviquil knocked

ed

ed at their door, worn out in constitution, though, according to years, hardly in the prime of life.—He was only the shadow of what he formerly was ; and his appearance, in point of dress, indicated that his pecuniary circumstances were by no means affluent ; yet still he was gay to a folly, and cheerful almost to madness :—in short, he was a professed gambler, and a noted debauchee ; accounted an Englishman of the first *ton* in France, and a man of the first taste and fashion in his own country ; he was the very quintessence of high life in London, and allowed at Paris to be possessed of that *je ne sçai quoi*, which stamped on him the real character of a *fine gentleman*.—Among the generality of the ladies of rank of both nations, he was adored as a man of gallantry ; nor were their ideas wrong : a man of gallantry he certainly was ; for to his great honour, he had seduced more women,

men, and afterwards forsaken them, than one half of his sex ; and in these circumstances, the *etiquette* of both kingdoms encouraged his noble and spirited conduct.

The poor innocent girl whom his cursed arts had taught to love him, entangled like the defenceless fly in the web of a spider, falls a sacrifice to the ensnarer.—Mark the result of his enterprise :—the miserable object finds herself betrayed by the man whom her guiltless heart taught her to suppose as generous as he was insinuating ; the *delicacy of virtuous women* forces them to discard the child of affliction, and victim of unmanly cruelty ; while the author of her disgrace receives double splendour from the deed becoming public, and is cherished by that society, and nourished by those comforts, from which he has hurled her for ever.—
Shame-

Shameful prejudice! — though a national custom, it is a disgrace to its followers, and stands the criterion of a narrow mind, and unfeeling soul.

Henry Peviquil, as was before mentioned in the former part of this little history, did not, when he found Matilda forsaken by her friends (at least by those who should have proved themselves such), behave to her in a manner altogether consistent with rectitude or politeness; and his manners at last became rude and insulting.—He once had the audacity to make proposals, which gave her the most serious alarms while she remained in his power. — The scene was entirely changed; the distressed orphan of the Maserini family, despised by his mother, contemptuously treated by his sister, forgot by his father, and insulted by himself, was now possessed or in every respect likely to be possessed
of

of rank, fortune, and friends.—Even the assurance of Henry Peviquil, now quite sober, could not overcome a little embarrassment as he addressed them; he, however, soon got the better of this vulgar failing.

For fear, however, that the spirit or honour of this accomplished gentleman should be called in question for thus seeking to re-commence an acquaintance he formerly disdained, and with persons who received his offers of friendship with that coolness which could not prompt him to go on with the pursuit, it will be necessary to inform the reader that he had interest in view:—besides gratifying his pride, to class them among other persons of distinction whom he could familiarly nod at in public places of entertainment, or chat with at the rout of a woman of fashion, he was actuated by another motive; more powerful

ful by far ; he knew Alfred had loved play ; he was himself a perfect master of the art, and was well acquainted with the powerful infatuation that encircles the votaries to that way of destruction ; therefore, whatever he might have heard relative to his having entirely given up the gaming-table, he conceived to be merely fabulous, and only raised either to introduce him to lord Albourne's esteem, or to be of service in the intended trial.—Now Henry Peviquil knew, if he could but once more draw him among those scenes he had formerly frequented, he would prove a very fit person to become a dupe to his artifices ; and this was the more to be desired, as he had just entered into a party something similar to that in which D'Ollifont had been engaged, and into which the baron Sampieno was introduced at Genoa.

With

With these very honourable determinations, he waited on his distant relations ; but he had the mortification to observe that all the advances he made were received with mere civility, and that there appeared very little hopes of Alfred ever again attempting the Faro table.

With great coolness they parted, and Henry Peviquil satisfied himself with declaring, at all the fashionable parties, that the whole trio, meaning the baron, Alfred, and his sister, were quite *outré* ; and informing his new colleagues, whom he had fed with hopes of bringing a new pigeon to exert their abilities on, that he found the fellow void of all spirit, and questioned if he had integrity enough to pay a *debt of honour* before a *tradesman's bill*.

CHAPTER XLV.

MATILDA now proposed a visit which she had in contemplation ever since their arrival in France, which was to the mother of Agnes.—She lived some distance from Paris.—Accordingly the fair fugitive and herself set off the next day, attended by one servant ; while the baron and Alfred were engaged to dine with lord Albourne.—They that morning received a letter from lord Milverne, which mentioned his having made every inquiry relative to his lordship and lady Caroline, but that all his endeavours proved useless.

Alfred had, however, dispatched a letter to inform him of their unexpected discovery, and his own happiness ;
which

which he supposed would have come to his hands before the date of his from England.

Agnes and Matilda pursued their journey, and, after a day's quick travelling, found themselves at the place of their destination.—The heart of the former throbbed with various emotions:—love, fear, joy, and doubt, alternately possessed her bosom; while the effects might clearly be perceived in her countenance.—The servant knocked at the door, and a young girl, whom Agnes did not know, opened it.—She instantly exclaimed, “My mother is dead!”

Unable to proceed further, she nearly fainted.—Matilda, with as much composure as she could assume, asked if the person who inhabited that cottage some months past, was living?

The

The girl answered, "Yes, and within."

Agnes clasped her hands in ecstasy. —Matilda first alighted, and entered.— A middle-aged woman was seated knitting: she arose at the entrance of the stranger, and seemed rather confused.

"You had," said Matilda, "a daughter?"

She changed colour, and could hardly articulate "Yes."

"And you lost her?"

She with still greater difficulty repeated the same answer.

The conversation proceeded no further:—Agnes rushed into the room,
and

and was instantly in the arms of her mother.

Tears relieved them both, and the latter then requested to know by what act of Providence she was thus blessed beyond expression.—Matilda related to her most of the circumstances that had happened to her daughter since she left the cottage, and concluded with an inquiry after M. Le Selet.

The question confused her greatly ; and, after a few moments, she replied, she had seen him but once since her daughter left her ; but had heard he was dead.

Matilda now turned the discourse relative to her behaviour to that gentleman and her child.—Her words carried in them a severe rebuke to the impru-

imprudent mother, who appeared to be perfectly convinced of her error; and declared she had not enjoyed one moment of felicity since her daughter's elopement,—torn as she was with remorse for her cruel conduct towards her.

Oliver, they understood, was well, and lived only for Agnes. — He was sent for; and their meeting can only be conceived — not described. — Matilda experienced the most heart-felt pleasure in settling every point with the old lady relative to their marriage, and rewarding this faithful and truly innocent girl with the best gift she could bestow on her, a good husband. — She gave Oliver an invitation to return, with Agnes, to Paris (who was to stay with her mother a few days), when they should be united, and he receive with his bride a portion suf-

sufficient to put them into a line of life that with industry would procure them every necessary and comfort they could wish to possess.

Matilda remained at the cottage that night; the next day she returned alone, and joined Alfred and the baron at madame Bosivi's, in the evening, where they were engaged to supper.—Here she was informed that it had been reported the whole day that D'Ollifont was no more:—it was not, however, by any means confirmed.

On their entering their lodgings, they were told by the servant that a strange gentleman had called, who particularly wished to see Mr. Maserini, or the baron.—In vain they endeavoured to imagine who it could be; their efforts were fruitless, and they retired unsatisfied.

They

They had just sat down to breakfast the next morning, when they were informed the same gentleman requested to be admitted. — He was accordingly introduced; but he was entirely unknown to them all.—His dress was plain; yet there was much of the gentleman in his manner, and he seemed to be in the decline of life.—They politely asked to know his business.

“ My business,” he answered, “ is rather of a strange nature; and the character I come under, will, I doubt, give you no very good opinion of my honour or integrity.”

Alfred, Matilda, and the baron, were astonished.

“ I am,” continued the visitor, “ the steward of count D'Ollifont.”

M 2

They

They were still more surpris'd.

“ I perceive your countenances change,” said he. “ But suspend your exclamations for a moment, while I inform you, not now of the murderer or usurper of another’s right, but the dying guilty wretch, who waits with all the horrors of a hell before him, to receive the awful change that plunges him into eternity!”

They were in some degree affected, and he was requested to be seated.

“ Alas!” he cried, “ I am not without my share of misery, which fell on all that came within his destroying power.—My name is calumniated for ever:—by the multitude I am called the confidant of a fiend whom I detest as much as they, but whose infernal
snares

snare beguiled my unsuspecting soul, and hurled me to destruction!—Yet I now come to fulfil his last request.—Before his eyes are closed for ever, he wishes to behold, what I should suppose would blast his very sight,—the baron Sampieno, Mr. Maferini, and his sister.”

It is impossible to conceive the amazement of all three.

“The count,” he continued, “four days ago made his will, in which he resigns all right to the estates of his late uncle; and, in some degree, to make what poor reparation is in his power, he has bequeathed the whole of his fortune, except some small annuities in charity, to be equally divided between the baron and the two surviving heirs of the Maferini family.—The amount of this property is nearly

M 3

sixty

sixty thousand pounds.—No scruples need prevent your receiving it, since it has not been accumulated by the frauds he has been guilty of, but by the favour he was once in at the court of France.”

He begged to know their determination; for, if they consented to the wishes of the dying man, he would himself conduct them at any hour of the day they chose to appoint. — It required some little time to resolve; but at length compassion for the sufferings of the criminal D'Ollifont overcame every other argument against the visit, and they fixed three o'clock that day.

The steward departed, and promised to be with them at that hour.

They considered that at all events there could be no danger whatever in
this

this request, as officers of justice resided in the house.—They, however, determined to take two of their own servants. — The person whom they had just seen, was, they had no doubt, Rabourn, whom they had heard lord Milverne mention in no very favourable manner; but they had found, since their residence in Paris, that his character had been cleared by D'Ollifont's own confession.

At three o'clock Rabourn arrived, and all four set off in the baron's carriage, attended by two men, to the count's mansion.—Their ride was short, as he lived no great distance from their own residence.—During the time, however, they understood by the steward that he was much worse than in the fore part of the day, and that he left him in strong convulsions; he therefore conceived (as the sight of him might

be too great a shock to miss Maferini's feelings) that she had better not enter his chamber, unless he should so far recover as to mention again a wish to see her.—This was settled, and they presently stopped at the house.

They were conducted through a superb hall into an elegant apartment:—the servants were desired to follow, and remained here with them, while Rabbourn went into the sick man's chamber, which was the next room.—He returned, and informed them his convulsions were gone off, but he was afraid he was speechless; though he seemed, however, to look as if he wished to know whether they were come.—Matilda begged to remain where she was, unless he should, by signs or words, express a desire to see her.

The steward led the way; Alfred and the

the baron followed, through a pair of folding doors, to an elegant bed-room, beautifully furnished in the richest taste. —At the further end was the count's bed, of crimson satin, with gold trimmings. —Two physicians, two nurses, a confessor, and three servants, stood round, and, at intervals, administered cordials to their patient.—The curtains were pulled on one side; and, extended on the bed, lay the wretched man, surrounded with elegance, clothed in the finest linen, and reclined on a mattress of down.—But what were the luxuries, the paltry elegancies, that surrounded him?—Could the structure of the room, —the beauty of the furniture, —the richness of the canopy under which he lay, —or the downy softness of his bed, give to him that comfort, that consolation or fortitude, which the awful crisis required?

M 5

Alas!

Alas! no; every moment did the trembling victim of guilt and ambition expect to see the gilded scene of earthly pride vanish into darkness, and that darkness open to him he knew not what,—but which it was hell to him only to conceive.

Alfred and the baron advanced slowly. —D'Ollifont's eyes turned upon them: —a kind of cold shivering seized him; and drops of perspiration appeared on his forehead, which one of the nurses dried off with a muslin handkerchief.

During the course of his diabolical existence, many were the sighs he had wrung from the widow, the fatherless, and the unprotected; yet the damp muslin that received these guilty drops of horror and remorse of conscience, might be said in some measure to atone
for

for the innocent tears he had drawn from female distress.—Who could tell his pangs, the inward workings of his soul?—Who could tell the convulsive terror that shook every limb?—Who could tell his secret thoughts which blasted every hope?

His senses failed him the moment the visitors appeared.—His convulsions returned with double force, and a fourth servant was obliged to be called in, to assist the others in holding him.—He raved on the names of Maserini and Sampieno; then, spent with exertion, bit his under lip with such violence that blood flowed abundantly from his mouth.

His ravings again returned. — By a sudden snatch he disengaged himself from hold; and, with a kind of exultation in his face, which was now partly

M 6

black,

black, he tore a large root of hair from his head; then, with a stifled laugh, fell lifeless on the pillow.

Such was the end of the most tyrannical, cruel, and unexampled villain,—a disgrace to the world,—a scourge to his fellow-creatures, and a curse to himself.—Ambition was the bait that beguiled him: and that ambition did but mock him, when he lay a disfigured corpse under the hangings of an elegant canopy.

Alfred, the baron, and Rabourn, withdrew to the next apartment, all greatly shocked. — They were informed that Matilda was in one of the lower rooms; the cries of the dying D'Ollifont were too much for her.

The news of the count's death was no sooner told than the whole house
was

was in considerable confusion, and the baron requested to know who was to have the management of his affairs.—The steward informed them, the will mentioned it should be jointly executed by Mr. Maferini and himself.—He assured them every thing was left in so exact a manner that it would occasion them very little trouble.—The count, before their arrival, had confessed every circumstance relative to the murders, which would, without any trial, put them at once in possession of their right.

Rabourn produced the will, and it contained every thing he had mentioned.—After having invested him with power to give all necessary orders relative to the funeral and other matters, they departed to their lodgings.

The disagreeable scene they had just witnessed, was repaid by the sight of
lord

lord Milverne, who received Alfred's letter the very day he sent off his own, and followed himself almost immediately.

He congratulated them on the fortunate conclusion of their affairs, though he declared he was malicious enough to wish these events had happened after his alliance with Matilda, that he might have been able to have proved to the world the disinterestedness of his love.

That evening he accompanied them to madame Bosivi's.—Lord Albourne received him as an old friend,—lady Caroline, as an acquaintance whom she had much esteem for, — and madame Bosivi, with the utmost politeness.

It is impossible to conceive a more happy party than the persons who then sat down to supper.—The recollection
of

of their past misfortunes endeared to them their present felicity; and they all agreed that a life tinctured with adversity receives that glow of happiness which an insipid medium never produces.

CHAPTER XLVI.

—Evening comes at last, serene and mild:
When after the long vernal day of life,
Enamour'd more, as more remembrance swells
With many a proof of recollected love,
Together down they sink in social sleep;
Together freed, their gentle spirits fly
To scenes where love and bliss immortal reign.

THOMSON.

————— Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history.

SHAKESPEARE.

THAT virtue and vice are their own rewards, is a proverb generally allowed; it is certainly founded on truth, and exemplified in almost every occurrence of life.

It requires but little observation, to perceive that the comforts, even the super-

superfluities of the world, procured by means not consistent with the moral government of mankind, lose the chief part of those allurements which tempted the possessor to gain them by illicit transactions.—The man who partakes of a scanty hard-earned meal by his own industry, enjoys more than he who eats of the sumptuous repast, at the expense of a fellow-creature's misery and oppression.

This position was proved in D'Ollifont, and the principal sufferers by his villany, the baron, Alfred, and his sister:—by accounts they now heard from Rabourn, the count underwent far more than they, though all three under the severest lash of adversity: for he was tortured by a guilty conscience, and haunted by phantoms of a disturbed and disordered brain.

His

His funeral was conducted by the steward who, in the will was left a small but decent competency; and to it, Alfred, his sister, and the baron, added a considerable sum.—The legacies were many of them over-paid, by their joint consent, to those who were in want of it. In a very short time all the affairs were properly settled, and the children of the Maserini family became possessed of all their right, by a short though regular process in law.—Agnes and Oliver returned at the time appointed; the latter was now introduced to the baron, and Alfred (now count Maserini), and received from them no inconsiderable marks of favour.

Matilda conceived it would be proper Agnes's mother should be sent for, to be present at her daughter's marriage, which was consummated about
a fort-

a fortnight after their arrival at Paris. — She returned the count and his sister a thousand thanks, and received from both a handsome present. — It was now determined, Oliver and his wife should set off for Grasville Abbey. — Count Maferini intended to have it put in repair, and fixed upon him as a proper person to superintend them, as he had been originally brought up in that line; for Leonard, who was still there, was too much advanced in years to take the care upon himself. — It was, however, left entirely to their own inclination, and they both gladly accepted the offer.

It was about a week after their departure, when the count Maferini and lady Caroline Albourne, lord Milverne and Matilda, were on one day united. Lord Albourne and the baron sighed at the altar, and could hardly stifle a tear;
the

the mixture of acute sorrow and extreme pleasure; half of it might be said to arise at the recollection of the time when they were together at a similar ceremony; the former as the enraptured bridegroom, the latter as the doating parent: the other half was occasioned by their present felicity, though under different characters; the bridegroom transformed to the parent, and the parent to the still further title of grandfather, viewing in the child of his departed daughter, every virtue, every female accomplishment, he thought he had for ever lost, when deprived of the affectionate tie of parental tenderness.

Both the count and lord Milverne now saw themselves possessed of every happiness they could even form a wish to have procured; this thought, as it crossed the mind of the former, by a train of ideas incident to it, brought
to

to his imagination that moment, when, with the sword of his departed father, he was going to put an end to his existence in a fit of phrenzy and despair. —He blushed at the recollection of an event which he now almost shuddered to think of; it held forth to him a striking lesson against a want of fortitude, and a rash unmanly precipitation.

They remained at Paris but a week after the marriage, and then set off for England, as it was their intention to spend in London the remainder of the winter season (which was now just commenced), return to France about June, and the latter end of the year proceed to Grasville Abbey, which would by that time be ready for their reception.

Their arrival in this metropolis was
imme-

immediately known in the fashionable world; and one of the first parties that received the general whisper, was that of Lady Peviquil.—They had slept in their house in Berkeley-square but one night, when the next morning their breakfast table was covered with cards of invitation and congratulations from different quarters, and among them one from sir Anthony and his lady.

Most of the persons whose names they mentioned, called in the course of the morning, and formed a complete groupe or levee; the chief part of which had shunned them with adverse eyes in the chilling part of their misfortunes, but who now courted their acquaintance with a sycophantic earnestness, when they found them encircled by the warm rays of prosperity and affluence.—All these were received with a very cool and distant civility, and among them
was

was lady Peviquil, who, with the true deceitful simper of a courtier, descended from an elegant equipage, and forcing her way through a crowd of the *great world* to the upper end of the drawing-room, in the most whining tone of tenderness, declared herself "happy beyond expression at seeing them returned to England." — Her compliments were received as those of a person whom they had never before seen; and her ladyship had the mortification to return with her pride extremely hurt at the reception she received.

Having spent the allotted time in London with considerable happiness and felicity, their time equally divided among select friends and public places of amusement,—they returned to Paris, and the hours floated away here in the same round of enjoyment. They several times saw both Henry Peviquil and his
sister,

sister; the former every day became more low and depraved; the latter, forsaken by the man whom she eloped with from her father's house, was now the *chère amie* of an Italian marquis, whose character by no means added lustre to his title.

At their return to Grasville Abbey, they found all the repairs finished entirely to their liking; and though the structure was by no means robbed of its Gothic elegance in the external part, yet it was made far more convenient and comfortable in the internal: the chapel was handsomely fitted up, and a tomb erected to the memory of their father, mother, and aunt.—They found the good old Leonard in perfect health; and his happiness at seeing them was extreme.

The count received a promise from lord Milverne and his sister, that they would

would spend three months in every year with them at the abbey.—It was settled the baron and lord Albourne should do the same; Paris agreed with them both far better than Italy; and they determined to live together the remainder of their lives.

The mansion of D'Ollifont was fixed on for their habitation; and madame Bosivi consented to take the care of their household upon herself. — No great distance from it lord Milverne bought an elegant chateau, which both himself and Matilda determined to make their general residence; though his lordship made her promise to spend some little time every two years in England.

Both lord Milverne and the count had the felicity, about twelve months after their marriage, to clasp to their

bosoms, under the tender title of father, a blooming infant; the former a girl, the latter a boy:—the families were seldom divided; for, when lord Milverne and his lady, with the baron and lord Albourne, had spent the allotted time with the count, both he and the countess, after a very short interval, returned the visit at Paris.

Agnes and Oliver, as soon as the repairs were entirely finished at Grasville Abbey, returned to lord and lady Milverne at Paris; the latter was made steward and principal overseer of the chateau, while his wife was the favourite and friendly attendant of Matilda.

Leonard remained at Grasville Abbey; and being too much advanced in years to take upon himself the office of superintendant, lived in it with a servant to attend him, received a handsome

some income from the count, and an annual present from lady Milverne.

The principal persons of this little history enjoyed their present happiness, by a recollection of former scenes of adversity, which taught them to feel for the unfortunate, and at the same time gave them the highest gratification, by being enabled to alleviate their distresses.

Sir Anthony and lady Peviquil continued their round of fashionable folly, till age impeded their course, and cast an insipidity on those scenes which had constituted the chief pleasure of their lives.—No relief opened itself to their view; dissipation had been their whole study; and when that failed, their existence became a burden.

Void of all fortitude, disgusted with
N 2 each

each other, and the world in general, they sunk into their grave much about the same time, and with the same horrors before them; leaving behind but just property enough to pay their debts, and bury them in the pompous manner they had ordered.

Henry Peviquil continued his run of gambling in France for near four years, when he became so notorious in that country, as to be obliged to quit it for England.—From his father, however, he could get no assistance; and, after a period of eight years, during which time he subsisted by common swindling, he was taken up for a highway robbery, received sentence of death, but took the king's mercy by accepting transportation,—and died on the voyage.

His sister lived with the Italian marquis before mentioned, for about two
years;

years; when she eloped with his valet de chambre into Switzerland, where he used her exceedingly ill; and for an attempt on his life, she was obliged to fly to a remote part of the country; was suddenly taken ill, and died in her twenty-eighth year.

Oliver and Agnes led a life of the utmost serenity and comfort,—they had several children, who proved a comfort to their increasing years,—and all turned out valuable members of society.

The good old Leonard enjoyed but a few years of felicity; he however lived to spend some time with every blessing he could wish, and to see all those scenes realised, that his most sanguine ideas could have formed.

Lord Albourne died about twelve years after his daughter's marriage; the
baron

baron felt most severely his loss; in short, this might be said to be the first event that occasioned any considerable damp on the happiness of the two families.—The chief part of his lordship's fortune was left to his daughter, and a considerable legacy to lord and lady Milverne.

The baron Sampieno, after lord Albourne's death, resided with lord Milverne, as madame Bosivi died of an apoplexy a few months before his lordship. He lived to a very advanced age, blessed with years of happiness, that might be said in a great measure to repay him for former misfortunes.—He left the whole of his fortune between the count and lord Milverne.

The count and countess of Maferini, with lord and lady Milverne, enjoyed a long series of happiness and felicity.

They

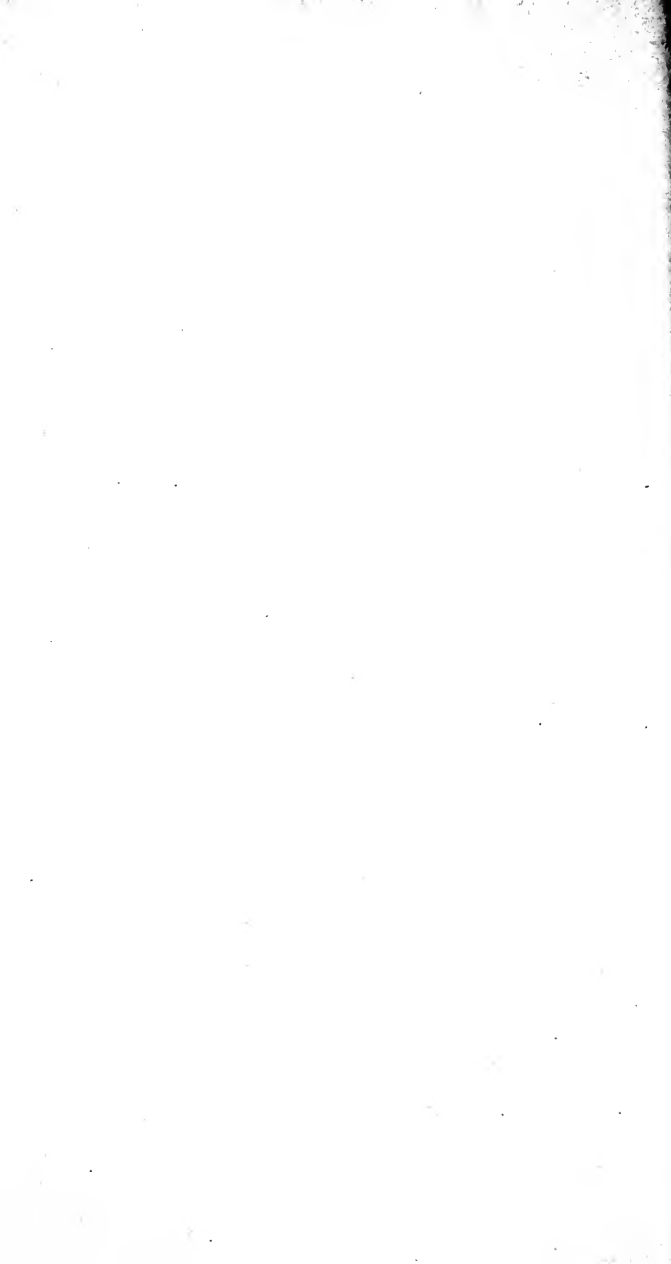
They had each several children, and lived to see them prove an ornament to their rank, and the community at large. Time heightened their blessings, and their declining years were like a setting sun, which gathers fresh splendour, as it gradually vanishes from our sight.

THE END.

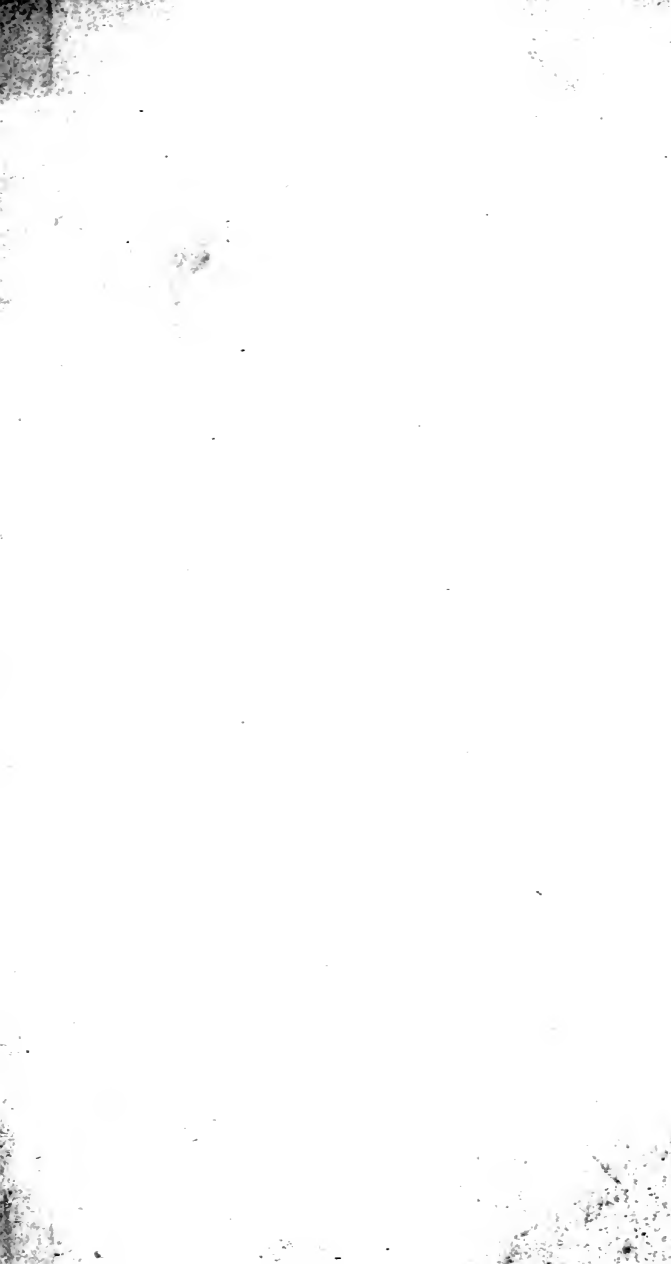
*R. Noble,
in the Old Bailey.*

The first of the new year
found the weather very cold
and the wind very strong
and the snow very deep
and the ice very thick
and the water very cold
and the people very busy
and the work very hard
and the day very long
and the night very short
and the year very new









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